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Procédé Goupil

Philosophical Studies

LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE
OF
HONORÉ DE BALZAC

TRANSLATED BY
KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY

SERAPHITA
THE ALKAHEST

Illustrated by
JULES GIRARDET

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Seraphita.

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INTRODUCTION.

It is highly probable that "Seraphita" cost its author more than any other of his intellectual offspring. The evidence of this appears in his correspondence. Writing to Madame Zulma Carraud in January, 1834, he says, "Seraphita is a work more severe than any other upon the writer." What he thought of it may be gathered from another passage in the same letter, in which he speaks of it as "a work as much beyond 'Louis Lambert' as 'Louis Lambert' is beyond 'Gaudissart.'" As he proceeded with it his labor became more intense. In March, 1835, writing to the Duchesse de Castries, he says: "The toil upon this work has been crushing and terrible. I have passed, and must still pass, days and nights upon it. I compose, decompose, and recompose it." He did not delude himself as to the kind of reception it was likely to encounter: "In a few days," he observes, "all will have been said. Either I shall have won fame or the Parisians will have failed to understand me. And inasmuch as, with them, mockery commonly takes the place of understanding, I can hope only for a remote and tardy success. Eventually appreciation will come, and at once here and there. For the

rest, I think this book will be a favorite with those souls that like to lose themselves in the spaces of infinity."

There is a legend to the effect that Balzac first conceived the idea embodied in "Seraphita" while contemplating a beautiful sculptured figure of an angel in the studio of a friend. It is possible that he himself may have made this statement, for he was fond of picturesque and dramatic incidents, and might easily have ascribed to a trivial occurrence a significance greater than it was entitled to. The true genesis of this, perhaps the most remarkable and unquestionably the most elevated work of fiction ever written, is fortunately not doubtful, for the proofs are in the book itself. "Seraphita" is the natural crowning flower of that philosophic exposition begun in the "Peau de Chagrin," and developed so much more fully in "Louis Lambert." The latter work moreover may be said both to have adumbrated and necessitated "Seraphita;" and it is proper to state here that whoever wishes to grasp the full meaning of this book must first read "Louis Lambert," which introduces and to a considerable extent explains the present work. The profound system embodied in the oracular fragments which fell from the lips of the rapt young sage, and were taken down and preserved by the faithful and clear-sighted Pauline contains the interpretation of the marvellous being Balzac's genius has set in that most harmonious and appropriate frame of the Northern skies and snow-covered plains, frozen fiords and black, ice-clad mountains. Indeed there is nothing more striking in this masterpiece than the beauty and ex-

quisite taste of its setting. Theophile Gautier without exaggeration styles it "one of the most astonishing productions of modern literature;" and proceeds: "Never did Balzac approach, in fact almost seize, the very Ideal of Beauty as in this book: the ascent of the mountain has in it something ethereal, supernatural, luminous, which lifts one above the earth. The only colors employed are the blue of heaven and the pure white of the snow, with some pearly tints for the shadows. We know nothing more ravishing than this opening."

It is all true. Nowhere have Balzac's artistic delicacy and spiritual subtlety been so victoriously employed as in the conception and execution of "*Seraphita*." There is no change in it from lower to higher regions. The author launches himself like an eagle from a cliff, high upon the bosom of the loftier atmosphere, and his powerful wings sustain him to the end at an elevation which enables the reader to separate himself with facility from the existence of vulgar commonplace, if it does not help him to respire easily in air so rarefied as to be scarcely adequate to the expansion of gross and fleshly lungs. To Balzac himself, whose versatility and sympathetic range were almost as broad and deep as those of Nature, this final flight of his philosophical and theosophical exposition was painful and laborious. Like Nature he could compass all forms of existence, but, like Nature too, he was most at home in the free working of tangible matter. In the "*Comédie Humaine*" he had however undertaken to picture

and to analyze life as it existed in his period, and to him this meant all life, from the lowest to the highest. Shakspeare is the only other writer who shows the same marvellous breadth of scope ; to whom every state and condition of humanity is sympathetic ; who sees into and apprehends every form of existence ; who can put himself in the place equally of the outcast and the saint, — the soul black with sin and shame, and the soul white with good deeds and noble aspirations. These two, Balzac and Shakspeare, have in common the qualities which most emphatically denote the highest form of genius. Among those qualities the precious endowment of Intuition ranks perhaps the highest. It is this mysterious and magical gift which explains the influence upon the human mind of the few great souls — Specialists, as Louis Lambert styles them — that have appeared at long intervals through the ages and have left their mark upon generations and centuries.

Louis Lambert declares that Jesus Christ was a Specialist, and the interpretation of this is that he possessed the power of striking that chord which vibrates in all hearts, of embodying in words those thoughts whose expression appeals to the largest audience and awakes the deepest and purest emotions. The great Mother of us all, from whom we proceed, in whose bosom we must lie, has the same characteristics, the same fecundity, elasticity, comprehensiveness, and sympathy. Jesus, indeed, came at a time when there was little laughter in the world. Life was very stern and grim when Rome was the mistress of the known habitable globe. It could

nardly have been deemed worth living if measured by modern gauges. As in the time of Gautama Buddha, five centuries before, the central problem was the wretchedness of existence. We who, surrounded by the comforts and luxuries of the nineteenth century, stand perplexed at the dark and gloomy views which those old races seem to have held in so matter-of-course a way, fail sufficiently to realize the actual pressure of misery upon the great majority of human beings at those periods. In sad truth, life was to them a painful puzzle. They were not, like us, chiefly occupied in determining how best to employ it and derive from it the greatest happiness or usefulness. Most of them were born into conditions escape from which was hopeless and continuance in which was intolerable. They were helpless and they suffered. What wonder if they looked bewildered to the unanswering sky, questioned the dumb face of Nature, and lost themselves in sombre speculations as to the why and wherefore of their existence, and the causes of the seemingly purposeless chain of being. To them deliverance from incarnation was the first requisite of a rational gospel; and this deliverance was offered, though in different ways, by the two great Teachers whose wisdom and promises have been respectively the Light of Asia and of Christendom.

To understand "Seraphita" it is necessary to take a somewhat wide preliminary survey. We must begin by fixing in our minds the scheme of evolution which it is intended to illustrate and to carry to its farthest mundane development, while projecting the vision even

beyond this point, and foreshadowing the outlines of a higher and an incorporeal state of existence. Human destiny, according to this theory, is a painful course of elevation and emancipation ; a working out of what we call Matter into what we call Spirit, — but which really is merely different conditions of one primal substance. There are three worlds : the Material, the Spiritual, and the Divine. These three worlds must be traversed in turn by the souls of men, which in these journeyings must pass through three stages, namely the Instinctive, the Abstractive, and the Specialist. Now the soul is guided on its way and raised gradually by the influence of Love. First, Self-Love stimulates and urges it onward and upward until the clogging stagnation of Savagery is escaped, and progress toward Barbarism and thence to what is now termed Civilization, is secured. Second, the love of others, Altruism, supersedes Self-Love in the most advanced men and women, and then the time is ripe for the establishment of those great religions which in their infancy, when the central doctrine is pure and fresh and full of magnetism, sways peoples and countries so powerfully, and changes the direction of the age. It is Altruism which has produced all the highest and noblest works the human race possesses to-day. It is that which is at the root of Duty, Honor, Faithfulness, Loyalty, Self-Sacrifice. It did not indeed have to be invented anew for modern humanity as the lost arts in many cases have been, for Altruism was never dead. But for long ages it was overlooked by man, for its hiding-place was then in the breast of

Woman, whose tender heart served as the Shechinah — the Sanctuary of exiled Unselfish Love.

Woman practised the long-forgotten virtue while suffering in silence the tyranny to which her constitutional weakness condemned her. From the beginning she has been the chief conservator of this indispensable aid to the higher life. If she has not succeeded in manifesting so strikingly as advanced men the serviceableness of Altruism to material progress, it is because the repression from which she suffered through so protracted a period stunted her intellectual growth, and thus rendered her deficient in the capacity to apply practically what she cultivated almost instinctively. On the other hand, her aptitude was greater in the direction of the Divine. There her facility in renunciation assisted her greatly. Her experience in sorrow and self-sacrifice through daily life, her culture in the philosophy of patient endurance, her habit of expending herself upon others, all fitted her in an especial way for ascent towards those lofty heights of emotion, aspiration, and ecstasy, which are as a rule known only by name to men. It is by the Love of God — the Divine Love — that the soul must be guided and supported in its passage through the third sphere, which is called the Divine World; and to this cult the woman-nature addresses itself with less reluctance and repugnance than the masculine spirit, so deeply attached to material interests, so unaccustomed to what seem the cold abstractions of divinity. As the Abstractive condition prevails more and more it carries with it a scepticism

which to the timid spectator appears to threaten Religion with total extinction ; and as the tide of materialism flows ever deeper and wider the cult of the Supreme, of the Unmanifest, of the Spiritual generally, is maintained by women almost single-handed. The French Revolution might have banished Faith from the soil of France had not the women refused to abandon their altars. Even to-day, in the same country, the spiritual elements of its civilization are being supplied mainly by the same humble believers in the Over-Soul. As to the men, materialism has smothered their higher feelings, and caused them for the time to imagine that they are or can be content with a world from which spirituality is excluded.

The function of the Specialist, following Balzac's theosophy, is to stimulate and develop the higher culture while working out his own enfranchisement. When the world has proceeded so far upon the path of purely material evolution as to threaten a fatally one-sided outcome, one of these advanced souls is incarnated and lifts the divine standard anew. The very fact of the close commixture between Spirit and Matter renders it impossible that the inclination and tendency toward the loftier mysteries of life should ever be wholly lost, and when the wave of materialism seems at its height the reaction is nearest and the spirit of the age is best prepared for fresh impregnation by the Logos. No more poetical or striking picture of one of these spiritual transmutations can be found than that which the late Matthew Arnold embodied in "Obermann once

More." This was the world of "some two thousand years" since :

" Like ours it looked in outward air,
Its head was clear and true,
Sumptuous its clothing, rich its fare,
No pause its action knew ;

" Stout was its arm, each thew and bone
Seemed puissant and alive,
But, ah ! its heart, its heart was stone,
And so it could not thrive !

" On that hard Pagan world disgust
And secret loathing fell ;
Deep weariness and sated lust
Made human life a hell.

" In his cool hall, with haggard eyes,
The Roman noble lay ;
He drove abroad, in furious guise,
Along the Appian way.

" He made a feast, drank fierce and fast,
And crowned his hair with flowers ;
No easier nor no quicker passed
The impracticable hours.

" The brooding East with awe beheld
Her impious younger world ;
The Roman tempest swelled and swelled,
And on her head was hurled.

" The East bowed low before the blast
In patient, deep disdain ;
She let the legions thunder past,
And plunged in thought again.

“ So well she mused, a morning broke
Across her spirit gray;
A conquering, new-born joy awoke
And filled her life with day.

“ ‘ Poor world,’ she cried, ‘ so deep accurst,
That runn’st from pole to pole
To seek a draught to slake thy thirst, —
Go, seek it in thy soul ! ’

“ She heard it, the victorious West,
In crown and sword arrayed,
She felt the void which mined her breast,
She shivered and obeyed.

“ She veiled her eagles, snapped her sword,
And laid her sceptre down;
Her stately purple she abhorred,
And her imperial crown.

“ Lust of the eye and pride of life
She left it all behind,
And hurried, torn with inward strife,
The wilderness to find.

“ Tears washed the trouble from her face !
She changed into a child !
‘ Mid weeds and wrecks she stood, — a place
Of ruin, — but she smiled ! ’

The poet intimates that the influences brought by Christianity are now exhausted, that they have ceased to operate because faith is dead. Yet he is not without hope for the future. Human expectation, raised in modern times to great heights by the promise of the

French Revolution, has indeed been sadly disappointed. Nevertheless,

“ The world’s great order dawns in sheen
After long darkness rude,
Divinelier imaged, clearer seen,
With happier zeal pursued.”

Despite all premature confidence and too sanguine anticipation, there is warrant for the inspiration which leads men to labor for the attainment of

“ One common wave of thought and joy
Lifting mankind again ! ”

When the Hour arrives the Man will appear. That is the teaching of history and that is the doctrine of the sages. The darkest moments are those which precede the dawn, and it is at what seems the very point of desperation that relief is given. There is indeed nothing occult in this view. It is founded upon observation and experience. The mystery lies in the causes of these opportune and portentous events ; in the evolution of the Avatars who in turn appear to change a world’s course and to rekindle the pure flame of Religion and Spirituality. Balzac, however, has not encumbered his subtle and profound study, as an inferior artist would have been apt to do, by showing the Specialist in the discharge of his function of Deliverer. His purpose was to exhibit and analyze, as far as possible, that rare and precious form of existence in which the progress of the spirit toward the Divine has been carried so far as to render continued toleration of earthly

life impossible. Seraphita is the Specialist upon whom no world-mission has been laid ; a final efflorescence of long-cultivated spirituality ; the last, most delicate and fragile link between Mortality and Immortality. In the androgynous symbolism under which Seraphita is presented, the author has embodied an archaic and profound doctrine. The male and female qualities and characteristics are so manifestly complementary that human thought at a comparatively early stage arrived at the idea of the original union of the sexes in one relatively perfect and self-sufficient being. In the Divine World, according to Swedenborg, such a union consummates the attachment of those souls which during their corporeal life have been in complete sympathy. The Angel of Love and the Angel of Wisdom combine to form a single being which possesses both their qualities.

To the theory of spiritual evolution taught by Swedenborg the doctrine of metempsychosis, or as it is more commonly termed at present, the doctrine of re-incarnation, is necessary. This doctrine may be traced to a remote antiquity, and while it is still comparatively unfamiliar to the Western world, it has for ages been at the very foundation of all Eastern religion and philosophy. The Rev. William R. Alger, in his "Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life," observes upon this subject: "No other doctrine has exerted so extensive, controlling, and permanent an influence upon mankind as that of the metempsychosis,—the notion that when the soul leaves the body it is born anew in another body, its rank, character, circum-

stances, and experience in each successive existence depending on its qualities, deeds, and attainments in its preceding lives. Such a theory, well matured, bore unresisted sway through the great Eastern world long before Moses slept in his little ark of bulrushes on the shore of the Egyptian river; Alexander the Great gazed with amazement on the self-immolation by fire to which it inspired the Gymnosophists; Cæsar found its tenets propagated among the Gauls beyond the Rubicon; and at this hour it reigns despotic, as the learned and travelled Professor of Sanscrit at Oxford tells us, ‘without any sign of decrepitude or decay, over the Burman, Chinese, Tartar, Tibetan, and Indian nations, including at least six hundred and fifty millions of mankind.’ There is abundant evidence to prove that this scheme of thought prevailed at a very early period among the Egyptians, all classes and sects of the Hindus, the Persian disciples of the Magi, and the Druids, and, in a later age, among the Greeks and Romans as represented by Musæus, Pythagoras, Plato, Plotinus, Macrobius, Ovid, and many others. It was generally adopted by the Jews from the time of the Babylonian captivity. Traces of it have been discovered among the ancient Scythians, the African tribes, some of the Pacific Islanders, and various aboriginal nations both of North and of South America.”

In fact there is scarcely a division of the human family, advanced at all beyond the stage of savagery, in which either the germs of this theory or the fully developed belief may not be discovered. The form in

which it has been held differs. Thus the Platonists and Pythagoreans supposed that human souls might inhabit the bodies of animals, birds, etc. The Manicheans went further, and taught that such spirits might be reborn in vegetable forms; and some have even imagined that sin and degradation could condemn human souls to imprisonment in rocks, stones, or the dust of the field. The Talmudists, the teachers of Oriental esotericism, and generally speaking the older and more authoritative exponents of the wisdom-religion, maintained that human souls transmigrated through human bodies alone, rising, step by step, to higher planes. A very convenient collection of opinions upon re-incarnation has lately been published by Mr. E. D. Walker, and this work may be commended to those who desire to realize something of the extent to which the doctrine has been held both in the past and the present. By abundant quotations Mr. Walker shows, not only that it was a cardinal tenet of the so-called Pagan religions, but that many of the early Christians — notably Origen — maintained it; while the array of modern philosophers, poets, men of science, and theologians who have even in recent times received it is well calculated to give pause to reflective minds. Such names as Kant, Schelling, Leibnitz, Schopenhauer, Bruno, Herder, Lessing, Goethe, Boehme, Fichte, and others, are found in the list, and even the sceptical Hume, in his essay on the Immortality of the Soul, observes: "The metempsychosis is therefore the only system of this kind that philosophy can hearken to."

Schopenhauer declares that "the belief in metempsychosis presents itself as the natural conviction of man, whenever he reflects at all in an unprejudiced manner. It would really be that which Kant falsely asserts of his three pretended Ideas of the reason, a philosopheme natural to human reason, which proceeds from its forms; and when it is not found it must have been displaced by positive religious doctrines coming from a different source. I have also remarked that it is at once obvious to every one who hears of it for the first time." The same writer observes further: "In Christianity, however, the doctrine of original sin, that is, the doctrine of punishment for the sins of another individual, has taken the place of the transmigration of souls and the expiation in this way of all the sins committed in an earlier life. Both identify, and that with a moral tendency, the existing man with one who has existed before; the transmigration of souls does so directly, original sin indirectly." This venerable doctrine, proceeding in an unbroken line from the pre-Vedic period to the present time, and held even now by the larger moiety of the earth's inhabitants, is, as Schopenhauer remarks, a natural belief; for it is that which most rationally and plausibly accounts for the most perplexing mysteries of existence. As developed by the subtle Hindu intellect it is full of attraction and persuasion to unprejudiced minds, and when the so-called law of Karma is applied to it, the resulting scheme may well seem to embrace and explain the most formidable considerations and objections.

Schopenhauer, it is true, raises the objection that in the Buddhist (or Hindu) doctrine of metempsychosis the discontinuousness of memory between re-births practically renders the process palingenesis and not metempsychosis. The German philosopher, however, but imperfectly apprehended the doctrine which he adapted so closely; for his substitution of the "will to live" for "Karma" is really little more than a change of terminology, his theory of the functions of Will being at bottom a Germanization of the law of Karma. Had he lived to study the later developments of Asiatic philosophy and metaphysics, it cannot be doubted that so open and clear an intelligence would have recognized the force of those deeper implications which round out and give consistency and completeness to the Oriental scheme of thought, and dissipate the surface difficulties of the subject. The advances made recently in Western psychology have contributed to the growth of a better understanding on many points, and among the most suggestive and illuminating studies may be cited those of Ribot on disease of the memory, and on double and other abnormal conditions of personality. The persistence of memory was held to be indispensable to a true metempsychosis by Schopenhauer because he had no conception of the refinements of Hindu speculation, which postulate the deathless principle of man as a congeries of separable parts, to the perishable among which physical recollection belongs. The Hindu posits, however, an undying psychical memory, which is incognizable by the incarnate soul, but which, nevertheless,

stores up every event of the numerous transmigrations through which it passes, to bring the whole series into the consciousness of the persistent spirit when it has accomplished all its educational changes, and has attained an elevation which enables it fully to comprehend itself and its evolution.

Science, nay, common experience and observation, throw some light upon this difficult subject. The phenomena of normal sleep serve to show how the persistence of physical life is maintained notwithstanding periodical, frequent, and continuous lapses of consciousness. The rarer phenomena of double personality, so carefully studied by Charcot, Azam, Binet, Ribot, Liégois, and others, emphasize the lessons of every-day experience in this direction. The remarkable cases in which, memory having been lost for considerable periods of time, it has been recovered as suddenly as it had disappeared, point out the lines of reasoning upon which the apparent change of personality may be reconciled with latent persistence and continuation of individuality. And indeed Schopenhauer might have perceived that the action of the Hindu law of Karma would be futile and purposeless if, as he concluded, each re-birth involved, to all practical intents, the creation of a new person. For to what end should the results of acts done in a former life follow and modify the succeeding incarnation if the two existences had no connection? Schopenhauer's misapprehension on this point was indeed far-reaching in its effect; for it led him to postulate a contradiction in terms,—an unconscious

Will-force, namely. Volition implies consciousness, and unconscious volition is unthinkable, a mere arrangement of words representing no comprehensible idea.

Swedenborg, with all his crudities and anthropomorphic fancies, was far more logical in his theory of metempsychosis, which is in fact in many particulars accordant with the Hindu doctrine. Re-incarnation, according to the Swedish Sage, is a process whereby the evolution of the higher faculties is made possible. In common with many of the most profound and lucid thinkers, he perceived the inadequacy of a single lifetime to the work of psychical evolution, and he adopted, or attained by independent or intuitional methods, the Oriental explanation of that lapse of consciousness which Tennyson refers to in the lines : —

“ Or, if through lower lives I came,
Though all experience past became
Consolidate in mind and frame,

“ I might forget my weaker lot ;
For is not our first year forgot ?
The haunts of memory echo not.

“ Some draught of Lethe doth await
As old mythologies relate,
The slipping through from state to state.”

As with the Hindus, he held that the break in memory which signalized the completion of a physical existence was itself a physical phenomenon ; but that the psychical processes of evolution went on unaffected by the changes

of death and re-birth, and that among these processes was the transmission, across the gap caused by death, of the qualities and tendencies and spiritual attainments belonging to the individual undergoing re-incarnation. In Oriental terminology Swedenborg's embryo Angels were the products of continued operation of good Karma. They represented the best results of human aspiration faithfully maintained until the upward yearning had destroyed the strong attachments to earth and qualified the spirit to breathe the rarefied atmosphere of the Divine World. In this evolutionary process, moreover, the highest examples of human development were reached, and in these a type was attained which exhibited the ideal of humanity as it was or as it might have been immediately after the descent of Spirit into Matter, and before that Fall which in the symbolism of the occultists signifies the victory of Materialism over Spirituality, the beginning of that long course of mundane and gross development which men call civilization, and which has blinded them, by its material gains, to the extent of the divergence of the race from its only permanent and worthy interests.

Seraphita was conceived by Balzac in a moment of supreme insight and inspiration, to embody Swedenborg's noblest ideas. Not that Swedenborg can be regarded as the originator of the theory which he expanded and modified and stamped with his own individuality and his own imperfectly developed spiritual perceptions. For it must be admitted by all candid students of the Seer that his supposed revelations are

often clogged and overlaid with the most palpable anthropomorphism ; that he derives his notions of celestial phenomena and existences from his personal environment with a curious childish simplicity at times ; that he exhibits in many ways his inadequacy as the vehicle of supra-mundane communications ; and his inability, partly through physical, partly through intellectual conditions, to transmit with fidelity or even to observe with accuracy that which was presented to his internal vision. Indeed it may be said that whoever wishes to enjoy the beauties which undoubtedly subsist in his writings must be prepared to submit them to a certain analytic and refining process. For they may be likened to the great world-religions, which, issuing clearly and nobly from their sources, have in time become discolored and polluted and changed sometimes into quite unsavory and ignoble streams by the operation upon them, during long periods, of all the grossness, perversity, materialism, selfishness, mendacity, and iniquity which men bring to the amelioration of their condition and the improvement of the creeds upon which they profess to rely for the security of their future well-being. Not to carry the parallel too far, it should be distinctly stated that Swedenborg assuredly infused no elements of evil into his representations and interpretations. He erred solely through temperament, and it may be surmised that the first period of his life, which was devoted to study in the physical sciences, strengthened in him that unconscious tendency to materialize spiritual things which is characteristic of his writings,

and which imparts to much of his description of the higher spheres so strange and infelicitous an atmosphere of earthly commonplace.

To penetrate to the heart of his subject it is therefore necessary to clear away a good deal of obstructive and non-essential matter. Had the Sage been a poet he would certainly have written more interestingly, and it may even be thought perhaps, more accurately, concerning many minor details. But the broad outlines, the firm framework of his system, remain entirely unaffected by his lack of imagination and grace of fancy; and it is upon the body of doctrine itself, and not upon the narrative powers of the Seer, that his reputation and the vitality of his teaching must rest. Here there is no defect of nobility, no sign of narrowness, no subservience to inherited beliefs, no undue elevation of symbolic or ceremonial hypotheses. From the voluminous theological library given out by him during his life and added to by posthumous publications, may be obtained a perfectly harmonious, essentially lofty, and intellectually attractive religious scheme and cosmological theory, though the latter is less easily cleared from its impediments than the former. It would not be possible, even were it desirable, to indicate more than the outlines of this system here. Balzac himself has presented all that he thought necessary to the comprehension of "*Seraphita*," in the following pages, and it is the purpose of this introduction principally to supply explanations which he omitted, perhaps because, coming fresh from mystical and occult studies which had

filled his mind to saturation, he took too much for granted the intellectual preparation of his readers.

One interesting consideration related to the peculiarities of Swedenborg's writings remains to be pointed out, and it has a wide bearing. All who are sufficiently interested in spiritual things to have examined what may be called the literature of revelation, have probably been perplexed and possibly discouraged, by the innumerable contradictions and discrepancies which are apparent in this branch of mysticism. Relations purporting to embody truthful presentations of the unseen universe, and believed by the Seers to be faithful records of true visions, offer, when compared, apparently hopeless and inexplicable divergencies. One consequence of this striking lack of harmony and consistency has naturally been to reinforce scepticism, and to give ground for the facile explanation of all such representations upon the theory of hallucination or disordered imagination. Such as are content with that explanation cannot be expected to make any farther inquiry into the subject; and this is the case with the majority, who regard with concealed or open dissatisfaction any hypothesis which by broadening the area of existence threatens to increase its responsibilities and extend its obligations. On the other hand, there will always be a considerable minority the character of whose minds leads them to explore the unknown, and the dominant influence of whose spiritual elements compels them to accept the possibility of a higher life beyond the grave, and under conditions difficult alike of

conception and comprehension. These inquirers are aware that according to analogy the problem referred to is not incapable of solution. Even in purely material life, for example, observation is invariably colored and modified by the personality of the observer. Every court of justice is a perpetual reminder of this. Human evidence concerning the most ordinary matters differs radically according to the character of the witnesses. Six men seeing the same thing will each give a different account of it, and they will rarely be found in agreement even as to essentials. Put six men into new and strange conditions, let them witness something the like of which none of them has ever seen before, and which is in itself seemingly opposed to all their experience, and we must expect still more divergent and irreconcilable reports. In such a case the evidence would be practically of no use in forming a conclusion.

In the researches by which men have sought to obtain knowledge of the supra-mundane the inherent difficulties must necessarily be very much greater. Supposing, for the purpose of the argument, that it is possible for certain peculiarly spiritual persons, by mental and physical discipline and preparation, or by natural aptitude, to penetrate behind the veil of Matter and obtain glimpses into the region of Spirit, it is nevertheless not credible that such persons should, while in the body, be capable either of clearly seeing or correctly repeating what they have seen. For however their spiritual perception may have been strengthened and clarified, it is obvious that its vehicle is ill adapted to the work of observation in so

foreign and unfamiliar a sphere. Between embodied and disembodied Spirit there is a great gulf fixed. Ultimately all Spirit may be identical in substance, but Spirit mixed with the grosser arrangements of Matter which constitute material life and phenomena has not, and cannot be made capable of, perfect insight to a higher state of existence, or a radically different state.

That this is the case the history of all mystical visions appears to indicate. It is not that the various Seers are hallucinated, or that they invent; it is that the divergences in their reports represent the insuperable influence of their material elements upon their spiritual perception. This may be tested by harmonies as well as by discords, indeed. The student of such subjects knows that remarkable resemblances in outline occur frequently among the mystical writings of widely separated races and ages. These resemblances cannot, in many instances, be accounted for on the theory of simple borrowing, for the proof is frequently attainable that borrowing would have been impossible. It would rather seem that these coincidences point to and emphasize the limitations of human research in this direction. It might be thought that many aspiring minds in many countries and at various times had obtained a certain dim insight to these obscure phenomena, — had grasped, so to speak, some salient points and broad general outlines; but that this imperfect perception had marked the utmost verge of their discovery, and that in every case the attempt to give exact form and body to the vision had been baffled and defeated by the

intrusion of those material elements which are inseparable from existence under the conditions with which alone we are acquainted at present. Thus we find that every so-called supernatural vision reflects, in greater or less degree, the educational equipment of the Seer, his habitat, his racial peculiarities, his every-day environment, and, almost invariably, the leading tenets of the religion he knows best, or which he professes. According to the theory here stated all these local characteristics are indications of spiritual myopia and defective enfranchisement from physical memories and material habits of thought. Nor is there one such vision, from the highest to the lowest, from the most ancient to the most modern, which does not bear the same marks of earthly distortion and adulteration. The visions of Swedenborg are full of such unconscious interpolations and perversions.

The danger of self-deception in all these spiritual adventures and experiments is obvious, and there are other dangers independent of the seeker's volition. The temptation to receive without much inquiry the flattering suggestion of a special revelation is of course in the very front rank of these incidental perils. The inquirer who ventures without due preparation and study to cross the boundary which divides the seen from the unseen is exposed, however, to far more subtle and insidious foes than the weaknesses and vanities of his own heart. He may easily drift into a Fool's Paradise wherein illusions of every kind cheat his undisciplined senses, and he may return to material existence

qualified to do much more harm than good by disseminating views which perhaps his personal character invests with a factitious authority. Nevertheless, the possibility of a certain insight to the phenomena of other conditions of existence is unaffected by these considerations, which after all only go to show the urgent need of caution both in essaying such excursions into the supra-mundane, and in dealing with the representations subsequently offered concerning discoveries made in them. It is perhaps scarcely necessary to point out that the novelist who undertakes such a theme as that of "Seraphita" must work under unfamiliar conditions. He is not free to give the reins to his imagination. He must be careful to maintain communication with his base, to use a military figure. He cannot employ machinery wholly unknown to his public, but must confine his efforts to embellishing and expanding those popular conceptions of spiritual phenomena reference to which is readily understood, even though the prevailing ideas may be poor, or grotesque, or gross. In "Seraphita" Balzac has followed this course with the success to have been expected from the versatility and subtlety of his genius. He has produced the most lofty and beautiful spiritual fiction to be found in literature.

Brief reference has been made already to a striking peculiarity in the portrait of Seraphita, — the fact, namely, that to Minna she conveys the impression of masculinity and to Wilfrid that of womanhood. So strange a confusion of sex, or perhaps it would be more exact to say so strange a dualism, certainly required

more explanation than Balzac has seen fit to offer ; and as the ideas involved relate to very ancient and recondite doctrines, it is necessary to treat the subject somewhat fully. Seraphita is intended to typify the nearest approach to physical and psychical perfection possible under the limitations of human existence. The whole narrative of her birth and training indicates this. Her parents are devout followers of Swedenborg, to whom they are related. There is much more of mystical spirituality than of material relations about their union and married life. In fact, the chief aim and end of both their lives seems to have been the securing of the proper conditions for the generation of a being who should be so pure and so in harmony with celestial things from her birth as to be capable of accomplishing in one incarnation the transition from the mortal to the divine. Seraphita as here represented offers curious analogies with Oriental theosophy. One might say that in Eastern terminology she was born to Arhatship ; and that though for her, as for all merely human beings, temptation and trial were unavoidable, her triumph was no less certain than that which Gotama Buddha attained to as the culmination of his vigil under the Bodhi tree. But the Northern ideal of human perfection embraced some conceptions which were less congenial to the Oriental intellect. It is one of the central merits of Christianity that it did much to recover for Woman the position too long denied her in the psychical scheme. Buddha indeed went far beyond his Asiatic predecessors in this direction. He admitted women to all the spiritual gains open to men, with one

exception. No woman could be a Buddha, according to him, though any woman might elevate herself to Arhatship. Christianity raised woman to the highest celestial dignities, and if in process of time superstition and bigotry warped and travestied the original pure symbolism and the early doctrines of the creed, much solid good remained from the mere familiarizing of men's minds with the higher view of womanly excellences and capacities.

In the esoteric creeds of many peoples, but chiefly those of European habitat, the place of Woman has for ages been, not merely among the highest, but literally the highest. She symbolized the Soul in the beautiful myth of Psyche. She was the spiritual element in humanity, lacking union with which mankind must be chained forever to the material, and waste his energies in struggles and labors which, even when most successful, only carried him farther from the true purpose of life, and rendered emancipation from carnal conditions more tedious and difficult. Something of this venerable doctrine may be gathered from the following citations, which occur in that beautifully written but mystical work called "The Perfect Way." Speaking of the "substance of existence," the authors say: "As Living Substance, God is One. As Life and Substance, God is Twain. HE is the Life, and SHE is the Substance. And to speak of Her is to speak of Woman in her supremest mode. She is not 'Nature;' Nature is the manifestation of the qualities and properties with which, under suffusion of the Life and Spirits

of God, Substance is endowed. She is not Matter, but is the potential essence of Matter. She is not Space, but is the *within* of Space, its fourth and original dimension, that from which all proceed, the containing element of Deity, and of which Space is the manifestation. As original Substance, the substance of all other substance, She underlies that whereof all things are made; and, like life and mind, is interior, mystical, spiritual, and discernible only when manifested in operation." The elucidation of the feminine principle is carried much further, and the whole passage will repay study, for it throws new light upon the mythologies and occult systems of many ages and peoples, and tends to exhibit a continuity of thought and a unity of conception regarding fundamentals, such as few would suspect who examine these questions hastily or without due preparation. The following passage relates to the concrete question in hand more directly: "As on the plane physical, man is not Man,—but only Boy, rude, froward, and solicitous only to exert and exhibit his strength,—until the time comes for him to recognize, appreciate, and appropriate Her as the woman; so on the plane spiritual, man is not Man,—but only Materialist, having all the deficiencies, intellectual and moral, the term implies, until the time comes for him to recognize, appreciate, and appropriate Her as the Soul, and counting Her as his better half, to renounce his own exclusively centrifugal impulsions, and yield to her centripetal attractions. Doing this with all his heart, he finds that

she makes him in the highest sense, Man. For, adding to his intellect Her intuition, she endows him with that true manhood, the manhood of Mind. Thus, by Her aid obtaining cognition of substance, and from the phenomenal fact ascending to the essential idea, he weds understanding to knowledge, and attains to certitude of truth, completing thereby the system of his thought."

In rejecting, as the present age has virtually done, the soul and her intuition, "man excludes from the system of his humanity the very idea of woman, and renounces his proper manhood." This it is which determines the wholly materialistic bent of modern physical science, and the coarse, callous, and corrupt tendencies which, as the century declines to its close, appear to characterize the prevailing civilization more strongly, and to emphasize with greater distinctness even the faintest reactionary movements and impulses. Balzac, in drawing Seraphita, was wholly true to the best received occult doctrine in endowing her with duality of sexual attributes, and the subtlety of his delineation is especially exhibited in the dominance of her womanly side. For though Minna is apparently misled by the masculine vigor and the self-contained resolution of her companion, the reader is permitted to see clearly enough that the impression which Seraphita produces upon Wilfrid is not only by far the stronger but by far the most natural; and this impression is that which the highest type of womanhood can alone create. But there is another symbol in this phase of Seraphita's nature.

For it is held that in truth and fact the dualism exaggerated for the sake of effect in her case is inherent in all human beings; that, to quote the same work once more, "whatever the sex of the person, physically, each individual is a dualism, consisting of exterior and interior, manifested personality and essential individuality, body and soul, which are to each other masculine and feminine, man and woman; he the without, she the within. And all that the woman, on the planes physical and social is to the man, that she is also on the planes intellectual and spiritual. For, as Soul and Intuition of Spirit, she withdraws him, physically and mentally, from dissipation and perdition in the outer and material; and by centralizing and substantializing him redeems and crowns him,—from a phantom converting him into an entity, from a mortal into an immortal, from a man into a god." For, without Love, Force can work only evil. It is the union of these two from which springs true progress,—the progress which overlooks the material and plants discovering feet in the permanent region of the spiritual. Woman is the symbol and the vehicle of the Divine Life. She is the one stable principle of human evolution,—the principle without which man's development would be in the line of decomposition instead of toward a higher vitality; his restless energies would wear themselves away in making the conditions of his existence more and more impossible of endurance. And this is the doctrine of all Hermetic Scriptures, including the Book of Genesis.

It is to be observed that Balzac does not follow

Swedenborg closely here. He goes rather to the sources of esoteric doctrine from which all students of occultism, from the earliest recorded times, have drawn their principles and the guiding outlines of their schemes of thought. It is also deserving of notice that however the personal element may and does alter and not infrequently disguise or pervert the details of such teachings, there is in the general form and character of them a certain harmony and close affinity which indicate community of origin; and as in the genesis of language philologists argue from root likenesses affiliation of several tongues which time has separated widely, with one mother tongue lost perhaps in the mists of antiquity, so from these indications of a common focus of knowledge may be inferred the pre-existence of such a spring and source; and not less rationally may be assumed in it a purity and approximation to absolute truth superior to the representations which have descended through defective vehicles, exposed to all the sophisticating influence of time and ignorance and materialism. Swedenborg was an agent in some respects peculiarly susceptible to these distorting influences. It does not appear that he at any time rose to the height of spiritual perception attained in the thoughts last quoted. Yet he recognized somewhat of the importance of the Womanhead in spiritual existence, and though he did not escape from the narrow and material views of Woman common to his age, he brought from his visions a reflection of the truth too exalted to be understood by his contemporaries.

“Man,” he says in one place, “is born an understanding, and woman a love.” And speaking again of marriage he says: “The wife cannot enter into the proper duties of the man; nor the man, on the other hand, into the proper duties of the wife; because they differ, as wisdom and its love, or thought and its affection, or understanding and its will. In the proper duties of men the understanding, thought, and wisdom act the chief part; but in the proper duties of wives the will, affection, and love act the chief part.” He recognizes also the necessity of harmonious conjunctions between the two natures to make the perfect man; but he does not realize the superior importance, the higher spirituality, of the woman’s nature. Here Balzac’s knowledge, intuitive or acquired, surpasses that of the teacher whose doctrine he has undertaken to illustrate, and in his conception of Seraphita he rises to the level of the loftiest mystical doctrine to which human faculty has ever attained.

Goethe, like Balzac, penetrated to the heart of the great problem in the last scene of the second part of “Faust.” His *Ewig-Weibliche* is the divine element which Woman both embodies and typifies, and to the purifying and stimulating emanations from which Man is indebted for whatever degree of enfranchisement from the clogging embraces of materialism he is enabled to accomplish. This is the force which *zieht uns hinan*, which lifts us toward higher spheres and inspires us with nobler aims; which on the physical plane keeps before our dull and earth-drawn eyes constant

examples of self-sacrifice, altruism, patience, compassion, and love stronger than death; which is most effective in subduing and extirpating the sordid animal tendencies and inclinations from our nature, and in substituting impulses and aspirations which may give us foothold in the path that leads toward a life better worth living. In the figure of Seraphita we contemplate the final efflorescence of such endeavor, the culminating product of a long chain of incarnations, during which the dominant impulse has been uniformly spiritual, and through which the carnal elements have been gradually subdued until at length they suffice only to give the mortal form coherency, and to supply the physical means of that inevitable agony of temptation which is the price of translation to the Divine, exacted equally from all who bear the conditions of earthly life, under whatever name they may be known. For when the day of Deliverance is about to dawn, the hosts of Mara assemble, or Satan calls his legions together, and the supreme test of the aspirant is undergone. Not for naught did the devisers of the mysteries of Eleusis subject the neophyte to a series of ordeals requiring mental and physical resolution and intrepidity. These ordeals symbolized the difficulties and pains which must be endured by all who seek to pass directly from the natural to the celestial.

When — to employ for a moment the terminology of Schopenhauer — the mortal resolves upon exercising “the denial of the will to live,” all the forces of life marshal themselves in battle array against him. The

Temptation, which figures in so many religions, is the exoteric symbol of this inevitable conflict. Nature, which knows only the conditioned, revolts in every fibre against the unconditioned. The Mephistopheles of the material world, she cannot suffer any of her children to escape her, and when she perceives that they are bent upon renunciation she summons her Lemures to guard all the outlets and prevent the flight of the soul to higher spheres. Nor is purification, innocence, inherited elevation of spirit, preparedness for the taking on of more lofty conditions, any defence against these attacks. On the contrary, the greater the refinement the greater the sensibility. So the red Indian, bound to the stake, endures with stolidity torture which would destroy life in the highly strung nervous system of a civilized man. When Sir Robert Peel received the injuries from which he died, so acute was his sensitiveness that he could not tolerate the gentlest surgical examination, even the pressure of the bandages occasioning him so much pain that it was found necessary to remove them. It is true that great mental excitement may so completely dominate pain as to render those injured insensible to it. Thus in battle men desperately wounded will go on fighting sometimes until loss of blood causes them to faint. So also strong spiritual excitement may operate as an anæsthetic, as is shown in the case of martyrs who, while their bodies were burning, are reported to have spoken with all the indications of religious rapture or ecstasy. It is known that in the hypnotic state complete physical insensi-

bility may be induced, so that needles or knives can be plunged deep into the tissues without causing the least sensation. Similar phenomena have been observed in many phases of the mysterious and Protean conditions called hysterical. Thus the Convulsionnaires of St. Medard actually found satisfaction in being beaten with the utmost violence by strong men, and suffered themselves to be struck with heavy iron bars, experiencing no pain or injury from assaults which were quite severe enough to have killed persons in the normal state.

But none of these instances affect the fact that as a rule sensibility increases with the gradual predominance of the nervous system, which is one of the most marked concomitants of civilization. There is indeed one consideration which at first sight may appear not to be in accord with this theory. It has long been observed that women commonly bear pain better than men; and it is perhaps generally supposed that the sensibility of women is greater than that of men. Of course no conclusion of any value on such a point can be established in the absence of trustworthy data, and statistics here are unattainable. While, however, it may be admitted, as a deduction from general experience, that women are usually more patient under pain than men are, it is by no means so certain that their sensibility is greater than men's, nor should it be too hastily assumed that it is even equal to the latter. Reasoning from analogy it might be supposed that the capacity of women to bear pain would be greater than

that of men, because the performance of their natural functions requires them to bear more pain, and Nature always makes provision for special requirements of the kind. Endurance may be confounded with insensitiveness, moreover, and this renders it more difficult to arrive at the actual state of the case. Woman has been disciplined by centuries of servitude and oppression to a patience which man has not, save in certain subject races, learned to exhibit. The American Indian, trained from infancy to conceal his feelings, and especially to repress all signs of suffering, could face torture with firmness. The modern city-bred man undoubtedly dreads the dentist's chair more, and perhaps actually suffers more in it, than did the savage in the hands of his enemies. Women, however, without any preparation but that of heredity, endure prolonged and poignant suffering, and often, if not always, with a composure which men at least are prone to impute to inferior sensitiveness. This inferiority, if indeed it exists, is merely physical, for there can be no doubt as to the superior spiritual sensibility of women; and there is room for considerable hesitation regarding the other branch of the subject.

In regard, however, to the capacity for bearing the psychical agony inseparable from such struggles as have to be borne by all who attain to the great Deliverance, the higher resolution must be accorded to the woman, and this Balzac recognized in drawing the character of Seraphita. We see her, as the final change approaches, plunged in the horrors of a supreme con-

flict with all the earthly desires and longings and ambitions. This pure and nearly perfect creature is indeed beyond the reach of the gross animal passions and coarse lusts which sway and control the merely natural man. She has been relieved by her resolute and austere progenitors from those burdens. But still she is not exempt from the common destiny. When Gotama took his station under the Bodhi tree —

“ He who is the Prince
Of Darkness, Mara — knowing this was Buddh
Who should deliver man, and now the hour
When he should find the Truth and save the worlds —
Gave unto all his evil powers command.
Wherefore there trooped from every deepest pit
The fiends who war with Wisdom and the Light,
Arati, Trishna, Raga, and their crew
Of passions, horrors, ignorances, lusts,
The brood of gloom and dread ; all hating Buddh,
Seeking to shake his mind : nor knoweth one,
Not even the wisest, how those fiends of Hell
Battled that night to keep the truth from Buddh.”

Even so the pure Seraphita was assailed ; and if not perhaps with all the sensual temptations which Mara deployed under the eyes of the indomitable Tathagata, with enticements not less powerful, and seductions not less insidious. For such is the constitution of human nature that it is unable to pass even to a state the infinite superiority of which it is fully assured of, without experiencing reluctance and sadness.

“ For who to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e’er resigned,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing, ling’ring look behind? ”

or, as the poet of “ The Light of Asia ” puts a like thought :

“ Sorrow is
Shadow to life, moving when life doth move;
Not to be laid aside until one lays
Living aside, with all its changing states,
Birth, growth, decay, love, hatred, pleasure, pain,
Being, and doing. How that none strips off
These sad delights and pleasant griefs who lacks
Knowledge to know them snares.”

Even the possession of that knowledge cannot avail to release the mortal from the pain of conflict. He may triumph over Mara in the end ; he may realize the illu-siveness of material existence ; he may attain to Nir-vana the blessed, the peaceful ; but he must win his way through the hosts of the tempter and prove his right to the crown by bearing the cross.

In this great ordeal Seraphita finds no help in her sin-lessness, because her spiritual development has brought with it not only increase of sensitiveness, but an expan-sion of the perceptive faculties which enables her to comprehend to the fullest extent the attractions and delights of the material opportunities and enjoyments she is required to renounce. The sacrifice demanded of her moreover embraces the slaying of Self. It is not only earthly desires that she must surrender, but all

desires ; for the yearning for the Divine, pure as it may seem, is capable of perversion into a disguised form of selfishness. She cannot cease to aspire, for all her nature is attuned heavenward ; but she must be prepared for any event, even for the disappointment of her dearest hopes. And that she is so prepared is shown in her reply to the inquiry of one of her companions as to whether, in dying, she expects to enter the Divine sphere at once. “ I do not know,” she replies. “ It may be but one more step in advance ;” that is to say, she may not have reached the end of incarnation. But she must suffer temptation none the less for being uncertain of the future. She must demonstrate her fitness for translation independently of any guarantee. The reader is not admitted to the solemn spectacle of the agonized soul’s passion ; and this is a fresh illustration of the delicacy and subtlety which characterize this masterpiece. It is Seraphita’s old servant David who describes the contest between the Celestial and Infernal powers, in exalted and mystical terms appropriate to the theme. The interest and impressiveness of the situation are deepened by the contrasting discord of the sceptical pastor’s sarcastic and incredulous comments. To him mistress and servant are alike mad. The excitement of David, which finds vent in the most ultra-Swedenborgian language, only amuses him. It is true that he is unable to explain, even to himself, many of the phenomena which he witnesses, but he fitly represents the natural world in getting rid of insoluble problems by the simple method of denying their existence.

There are crises in the night-long struggle, at which David seems almost to fear that Seraphita will succumb to her tempters; but it is clearly impossible that she should do so, having reached the elevation at which she is arrested in order that she may purge herself of the last earthly ties. The whole episode is full of beauty and suggestiveness, and it is so skilfully executed that no touch of bathos mars its deep spiritual charm.

The scene which follows the Temptation of Seraphita is intended to illustrate at once the clairvoyant and the intellectual powers of this marvellous creature. It is the final manifestation of the masculine elements in her nature, the demonstration of a superiority of knowledge and understanding not less marked than that of her spirituality. Wilfrid, who represents a soul in a state of unstable equilibrium, poised so insecurely that a comparatively feeble impulse may alter its direction upward or downward, is possessed by a strong but wholly carnal passion for the beautiful and mysterious maiden, and he is the vehicle — on the physical plane — of those material powers which are leagued in the endeavor to drag her back to earth. But Seraphita's spirituality is too strong for Wilfrid's materialism. She sees through his design, reads his character, and at once determines that he shall be saved from himself, and by marriage with Minna — the typical union between Understanding and Love — be set in the path of aspiration, and assisted toward the attainment of divine enfranchisement. At the same time Seraphita resolves to open the eyes of the sceptical pastor as far as may be pos-

sible, and to lift him out of his gross and paralyzing carnality. To these ends she addresses herself in the remarkable exposition and arguments which she delivers at a length which would be wearisome but for the lucidity, force and closeness of the reasoning, and the profound interest which attaches to the problems brought under discussion.

This speech is also to be regarded as a vindication of Intuition, for Seraphita is represented as having been reared entirely without education after the usual methods, and the pastor Becker naturally insists that she must be phenomenally ignorant, and quite incapable of showing a reason for her faith, however fanatical that faith may be. His object, therefore, is to test and expose her want of information, and so to convince Wilfrid, whose infatuation for her vexes him, that she is merely a self-deluded visionary, who probably inherits a strong tendency toward mysticism from her Swedenborgian parents. Seraphita at once perceives the mixed purposes of her visitors, and loses no time in showing that she understands the situation. Then she proceeds to dissect Becker's mind, to analyze his scepticism, to state his positions with care and candor, to allow all his objections and difficulties their full weight, and finally to retort upon him with a defence and exposition of the spiritual in the universe, which leaves him amazed and dumb. In concluding the review of M. Becker's doubts and the reasonings upon which they rest, it is to be noted that the feminine element in Seraphita again comes to the front. The understanding

does not suffice for the elucidation of the spiritual truths which are next to be dealt with. The Woman-Soul is at this point called upon to expound those highest mysteries which are involved in the apprehension of the great scheme of things. The key-note of this second and more elevated branch of Seraphita's discourse is struck in the opening words. "Belief is a gift. To believe is to feel. To believe in God it is necessary to feel God." Is this the language of Mysticism? Seraphita has in her opening remarks dwelt upon the fact — patent beyond serious controversy — that Man unites, or is the point of junction for, two worlds, the Finite and the Infinite. But if this be so how is it possible to explain all his relations in terms of the Finite; how can it be possible to comprehend all his relations without taking account of those which link him with the Infinite? Nevertheless, neither explanation nor comprehension is to be attained so long as the methods and the terminology of the inferior, the conditioned state, are alone employed in the investigation. The situation is precisely that of the men of science who involve themselves and others in hopeless confusion by discussing Spirit in terms of Matter. Neither can Matter be discussed in terms of Spirit. To each world its own terminology, its own methods and instruments of research. The Finite in Man can never apprehend Infinity; but the Infinite in Man may approach realization of that to which it is by unity of nature allied.

Belief, then, or Faith, is the key which alone opens

the door of the Infinite, and it does so by lifting the soul above the material plane, and endowing it with perceptive powers which cannot be acquired through any material educational methods. The Understanding can be cultivated to such an extent that it may explain and realize the meaning of the purely phenomenal ; but there the limit of its capacity is reached. It is the agent of material apprehension, perfectly fitted to that end, and supreme judge in its own court. But its jurisdiction ceases where the domain of Faith begins, and the latter must be the guide and interpreter throughout the spiritual regions. The Understanding refuses to believe what it cannot grasp, and the position is perfectly natural and perfectly just. But the Understanding is, after all, only one element in the constitution of Man, and it is the lower power of the two which are given him for guidance. According to the philosophy of Louis Lambert (of which "Seraphita" is the final fruition) the civilization of the world is supported and carried forward in the main, and altogether so far as its material aspects are concerned, by what he terms the Abstractive, — that is, by those who confine themselves to the development of their intellectual faculties, and virtually ignore their spiritual side. There is no height or splendor or glory of material civilization which cannot be thus attained ; but a purely material civilization, however brilliant and outwardly prosperous and flourishing it may appear, must contain the seeds of its own decay and overthrow, as all history teaches by the most pregnant and impressive examples. Unassisted Reason

shows the existence of many mysteries beyond the power of Reason to solve; yet Reason persists in rejecting the agencies whereby if at all these mysteries may be explained,—and in so acting renounces the hope of ever penetrating beyond secondary causes and phenomenal appearances. This, according to Seraphita, is the explanation of what is now called Agnosticism.

It may be of interest to see what Swedenborg teaches in this connection. Faith, according to the Swedish sage is “an internal acknowledgment of truth.” Faith and truth, he declares, are one, and the angels know nothing of faith, but what men call faith they call truth. But he affirms that “by things known to explore the mysteries of faith is as impossible as for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, or for a rib to govern the purest fibrils of the chest and heart,—so gross, yea, much more gross, is the sensual and knowing relatively to the spiritual and celestial.” And concerning the belief in and acceptance of things not comprehended by the intellect, he says: “Every one may see that a man is governed by the principles he adopts, be they ever so false, and that all his knowledge and reasoning favor his principles; for innumerable considerations tending to support them readily present themselves to his mind, and thus he is confirmed in falsities. He, therefore, who assumes as a principle that nothing is to be believed until it is seen and understood can never believe; for spiritual and celestial things are neither seen with the eyes nor grasped by the imagination.” And again, he says: “There are

two principles, one of which leads to all folly and madness, the other to all intelligence and wisdom. The former principle is to deny all things, or to say in one's heart that he cannot believe them until he is convinced by what he can comprehend or be sensible of; this principle is what leads to all folly and madness, and may be called the negative principle. . . . Those who think from the negative principle, the more they take counsel of matters of reason, of knowledge, and of philosophy, the more they plunge themselves into darkness, until at length they come to deny all things. The reason is that from things inferior no one comprehends things superior, that is, things spiritual and celestial, — still less things divine, because they transcend all understanding; and besides, everything is then involved in negatives from the beginning."

The argument of Seraphita is to the same effect. Finite Reason, she contends, cannot comprehend Infinite purposes and orderings. The measuring instrument which man seeks to apply to the divine is inadequate. He might be more modest if he could be made to see how frequently he fails to comprehend, not solely the Infinite, but phenomena which lie, so to speak, at his own door, and upon his own plane of existence. Again, this sceptical being ventures to deny God because of His intangibility and invisibility, while at the same time he gives name and form to abstractions, — as for instance, Number. It is true that Number is a reality, but the average man does not comprehend its significance, and the Number which he figures to himself, and

wherewith he amuses himself, is very different from the real Number. The same considerations apply to the abstractive Time and Space, neither of which is more than a name, representing no noumenon, answering to no actual entity, being in fact no more than an invention for the convenience of measuring those human relations which cannot be more truly and exactly estimated, because — and only because — the human mind is so inadequate to the work which it desires and attempts to perform. The human mind as confined and restricted by scepticism, that is ; for when opened by spiritual illumination it is capable of rising to great altitudes, and of apprehending many things in their true and ultimate significance.

The staple objection to the form of argument employed here by Seraphita is the futility of all modes of inquiry which transcend the Reason ; it being assumed that the human mind is incapable of receiving demonstration of truth otherwise than through the operation of the reasoning faculty, which proceeds entirely upon experience, and, where experience ends, ceases to have any *point d'appui*. A very fair example of this line of argument is to be found in Lotze's "Microcosmos." "If," that author observes, "reason is not of itself capable of finding the highest truth, but on the contrary stands in need of a revelation which is either contained in some divine act of historic occurrence, or is continually repeated in men's hearts, still reason must be able to understand the revealed truth at least so far as to recognize in it the satisfying and convincing conclu-

sion of those upward-soaring trains of thought which reason itself began, led by its own needs, but was not able to bring to an end. For all religious truth is a moral good, not a mere object of curiosity. It may therefore include some mysteries inaccessible to reason, but will only do so in as far as these are indispensable in order to combine satisfactorily other and obvious points of great importance; the secrecy of any mystery is in itself no reason for venerating it; a secrecy that was permanent and in its nature eternal would only be a reason for indifference towards anything which should thus refuse to be brought into connection with mental needs; and finally, above all things, to revel in secrets which are destined to remain secrets is necessarily not in accord with the notion of a revelation." The philosopher then proceeds to put these questions: "But must that which is a secret for cognition be always really a secret? Does not the nature of faith consist in this, that it affords a certainty of that which no cognition can grasp, as well of *what* it is, as *that* it is? And does not all science itself, when it has finished its investigations of particulars, come back to grasp, in a faith of which the certainty is indemonstrable and yet irrefragable, those highest truths on which the evidence of other knowledge depends? There is certainly a germ of truth in this rejoinder; but not the less clear is the essential difference that separates such scientific faith from religious faith." It is unnecessary to follow Lotze's argument further. Enough has been quoted to illustrate the common error of what Louis

Lambert would have called the abstractive method of ratiocination.

Seraphita tells Pastor Becker that he and she speak different languages in discussing these high questions, and the same may be said of all who take opposite sides on the question of psychologic capacities and potentialities. The position of Seraphita, who is a Specialist, should, however, be made clear. All knowledge is relative. There are mysteries which no created being can ever comprehend. As Seraphita puts it, "To understand God would be to *be* God." Thus also the Asiatic occultists, who profess to derive their knowledge of the origin and destiny of the universe from higher intelligences, corresponding in many respects to the angels of the Christian Church, affirm that neither their exalted correspondents and revelators nor the still higher beings with whom the latter are in relations, possess any knowledge of the Supreme Being. Science pretends no farther than to the origination of the universe by Motion; the genesis of that Motion lies beyond its utmost reach of apprehension. But the contention of Balzac is that a much higher knowledge than is attainable by the Reason is within the grasp of a duly trained and disciplined Humanity, developed in one direction through many incarnations, as Seraphita is supposed to have been, and so purified from the materialism which in the race at large obstructs perception that to her strengthened and clarified vision mysteries cease to be obscure, and the sphere of cognition is indefinitely enlarged. Of course it is apparent that such a being

cannot argue on anything like equal terms with such a gross sceptic as Pastor Becker. In her, intellection has already come to operate angelically rather than humanly, and what to her opponent appears paradox and incomprehensibility is to her demonstrated and familiar truth. Nowhere is the tension of Balzac's thought and the resolute maintenance of his imagination upon this elevated plane of imaginative creation more strikingly exhibited than in this long and subtle discourse of Seraphita. An inferior artist could not have borne so severe a test, but would have lapsed into commonplace before the end was reached. Seraphita, however, supports her high arguments with perfectly natural ease throughout. The philosophy of Louis Lambert will be recognized repeatedly in it. This is in accordance with the author's general scheme. Seraphita herself is the culmination of the noble body of thought outlined in "Louis Lambert." In her we see the consummation of the long process of transformation and evolution through and by which the mortal puts on immortality, the merely Human blossoms into the celestial.

It is also to be observed that though Balzac has modernized the conception of this marvellous and beautiful process, he is in no way to be regarded as the inventor of that conception. As to its origin we shall perhaps seek it in vain, for the deeper we explore the occult and religious literature of antiquity the more evidence we find of the archaism of the central belief. The doctrine of metempsychosis is correlated with that

of perfectibility, while the means by which the latter end may be attained have been so constantly and minutely discussed, tested, and analyzed by Eastern philosophers and psychologists as to furnish forth a complete code, the very terminology of which has bewildered and baffled Western philologists, men of science, and above all, theologians. Nevertheless, a belief in the possibility of realizing in the flesh a much higher knowledge and perception than materialist methods of education are capable of attaining to, has in various ways descended and persisted through all ages to the present time; and in support of this belief there has been preserved and recorded a certain amount of what, in almost any other case, would generally be accepted as substantive evidence, but in this case is accepted or rejected with little regard to its true evidential value, and for the most part according as the individual to whom it is submitted is dominated by Spiritual or Materialist prepossessions. It is true that in the West the credibility of all such phenomena has been weakened by the fading out of the doctrine of reincarnation; for apart from that doctrine every approximation to the higher life recorded must savor so much of miracle as to repel philosophic minds and cause consideration of the alleged facts to be refused or abandoned. In Oriental countries, where metempsychosis has never ceased to be accepted, it obviously supplies plausible explanations for many appearances which under other conditions would strongly suggest the supernatural. Among Asiatics, reincarnation is con-

sidered the normal, nay, the inevitable, career, and in connection with the Law of Karma it affords a faith which is held by a large proportion of the earth's inhabitants. Thus it is clear that the idea of Seraphita would be at once understood by a Hindu, who would see nothing fanciful or extravagant in the personification, which he would probably classify in his own mind as that of a female Rishi. Swedenborg, whether consciously or unconsciously, derived many of his beliefs as to other states of existence, it is not necessary to say from the Eastern sages, but at all events from the same sources which were open to those sages. He altered some of these Oriental ideas strangely, beyond a question, and clothed them with material garments such as would have bewildered the Indian philosophers, whose theories were of the soul, without the alloy of earth which modern civilization has, naturally perhaps, given to them. In some respects Seraphita is more Oriental than Swedenborgian; but in truth Balzac has put many occult principles together in fashioning this unique creature, and in the end he has, perhaps wisely, borrowed freely the imagery and the color as well as the general conceptions which characterize what are called the ecstatic visions of the Christian saints, especially the mystics of comparatively modern times.

The occult doctrine of Number is touched upon in Seraphita's discourse. As the subject has already been considered at some length in the Introduction to "Louis Lambert," and as Balzac makes his meaning comparatively clear, perhaps it is not necessary to reopen that

question ; to a full understanding of which, moreover, some knowledge of the Kabbala is requisite. It may, however, be as well to point out that Balzac does not follow Pythagoras in materializing Number ; the entities to which he refers are purely spiritual and mystical. But there is in this remarkable discourse of Seraphita a view of the straight line and the circle which it is necessary to examine carefully, for at first sight it appears to be in hopeless contradiction with all occult teaching. Having shown that the circle and the curve govern created forms, Seraphita proceeds thus : “ Who shall decide between rectilinear and curvilinear geometry ? between the theory of the straight line and that of the curve ? If in His vast work, the mysterious Artificer, who knows how to reach his ends miraculously fast, never employs a straight line except to cut off an angle and so obtain a curve, neither does man himself always rely upon it. The bullet which he aims direct proceeds by a curve, and when you wish to strike a certain point in space, you impel your bombshell along its cruel parabola. None of your men of science have drawn from this fact the simple deduction that the Curve is the law of the material worlds, and the Straight line that of the spiritual worlds ; one is the theory of finite creations, the other the theory of the infinite. Man, who alone in this world has a knowledge of the Infinite, can alone know the straight line ; he alone has the sense of verticality placed in a special organ. A fondness for the creations of the curve would seem to be in certain men an indication of the impurity of their nature still con-

joined to the material substances which engender us ; and the love of great souls for the straight line seems to show in them an intuition of heaven."

This doctrine is clearly not derived from Swedenborg, whose central theory of Correspondences is fundamentally in conflict with it. According to the Swedish seer everything material is a type and representation of something spiritual. Swedenborg's philosophical hypothesis of vortices, moreover, has nothing in common with this intimation of the superior spirituality of the line. That the circle is the most perfect of all figures is never doubted by the author of the vortical theory. Professor Winchell has condensed this theory conveniently, and from him a few sentences may be quoted: "The first cause is the infinite or unlimited. This gives existence to the first finite or limited. That which produces a limit is analogous to motion. The limit produced is a point, the essence of which is motion ; but being without parts, this essence is not actual motion but only a conatus to it. From this first proceed extension, space, figure, and succession, or time. As in geometry a point generates a line, a line a surface, and a surface a solid, so here the conatus of the point tends towards lines, surfaces, and solids. In other words, the universe is contained *in ovo* in the first natural point. The motion toward which the conatus tends is circular, *since the circle is the most perfect of all figures, and tendency to motion impressed by the Infinite must be tendency to the most perfect figure.*" And again: "The most perfect figure of the motion

above described must be the perpetually circular. . . . It must necessarily be of a spiral figure, which is the most perfect of all figures," — and much more reasoning to the same effect. And in this view of the circle Swedenborg does but follow the most ancient of occult doctrines, as may readily be perceived. The most venerable cosmogonic symbol is the point in the circle, — the point representing the creating Logos, the Breath of the Absolute imparting Motion to Matter; the circle typifying the unlimited, the Infinite, which includes and controls all created things. Again, the Spirit of Life and Immortality have from the earliest times been symbolized by the circle. The whole Kabbala proceeds upon the theory of circles, which is the formulating principle of the doctrine of Emanations. In all hermetic scriptures the same teaching will be found. The circle was the symbol of the most spiritual views. Thus Proclus says: "Before producing the material worlds which move in a circle, the Creative Power produced the *invisible* Circles." The Golden Egg of Brahma is another illustration of the universality of this doctrine. In fact, as is observed in "The Secret Doctrine," "In the secret doctrine the concealed unity — whether representing Parahrahmam, or the 'Great Extreme' of Confucius, or the Deity concealed by Phta, the Eternal light, or again, the Jewish En-Soph — is always found to be symbolized by a circle, or the 'nought' (absolute *No* — *Thing* and Nothing, because it is *infinite* and the All); while the God-manifested (by its works) is referred to as the *diameter of that circle*. The symbol-

ism of the underlying idea is thus made evident; the right line passing through the centre of a circle has, in the geometrical sense, length, but neither breadth nor thickness; it is an imaginary and feminine symbol, crossing eternity and made to rest on the plane of existence *of the phenomenal world*. It is dimensional, whereas its circle is dimensionless, or, to use an algebraical term, it is the dimension of an equation."

The doctrine of Correspondences, which requires that everything material must be patterned upon something spiritual is indeed not original with Swedenborg. We find it already formulated in the *Timæus* of Plato. Timæus there says: "Which of the patterns had the artificer in view when he made the world, the pattern which is unchangeable, or that which is created? If the world be indeed fair and the artificer good, then, as is plain, he must have looked to that which is eternal. . . . Every one will see that he must have looked to the eternal, for the world is the fairest of creations and he is the best of causes." And again Timæus says: "And he gave to the world figure which was suitable and also natural. But to the animal which was to comprehend all animals, that figure was suitable which comprehends within itself all other figures. Whereupon also he made the world in the form of a globe, round as from a lathe, in every direction equally distant from the centre to the extremes, the most perfect and the most like itself of all figures; for he considered that the like is infinitely fairer than the unlike." To the same effect may be cited Schopenhauer, who ob-

serves: "Throughout and everywhere the true symbol of nature is the circle, because it is the scheme or type of recurrence. This is, in fact, the most universal form in nature, which it carries out in everything, from the course of the stars down to the death and the genesis of organized beings, and by which alone, in the ceaseless stream of time, and its contents, a permanent existence, *i. e.*, a nature, becomes possible." Is not the curve too emblematic of all that to the human mind appears pure and beautiful and spiritual? What is it that appeals to the eye as beauty in regarding a landscape? A level plain upon which the sole relief of form occurs in straight trees, produces not only a passing impression of dreary monotony but affects the temperaments of all who inhabit it, as the character of the steppe-dweller everywhere demonstrates. So too in architecture. Its primitive forms, ere the arch was discovered, were harsh and almost repulsive. This may be seen in the earliest Egyptian architecture. The whole system was elevated by the introduction of the arch, and by the adoption of the curves of Nature in the lotus capital and the bulb-form pillar. Mentally eliminate the curves from the noblest architectural monuments, such as the Taj Mahal, and their charm is destroyed. Compare Shah Jehan's superb construction with the Parthenon, and it will be seen at once that while in the latter it is mainly the sense of symmetry which is impressed, the former awakens emotions of a far higher character, for it suggests a beauty scarcely of earth; it is in the perfect grace and exquisite harmony of its lines, in unity

with Nature's noblest mood, and might well be the creation of these Devas with which the mythology of Hindustan peoples the unseen universe. No poet can fail to perceive and take delight in the beauties of the curve as exhibited in Nature; and the poetical vision has never been more subtly or sweetly expressed than by Emerson: —

“ For Nature beats in perfect tune,
And rounds with rhyme her every rune,
Whether she work in land or sea,
Or hide underground her alchemy.
Thou canst not wave thy staff in air,
Or dip thy paddle in the lake,
But it carves the bow of beauty there,
And the ripples in rhymes the oar forsake.”

So fond is Nature of the curve that it underlies all her work and gives to it the deepest charm and attraction. The straight line she does not greatly affect, nay, she takes a mischievous pleasure, apparently, in baffling man's efforts to establish it. Even her blindest forces resist its manifestations as by some law. “Thou canst not wave thy staff in air,” but it “carves the bow of beauty there.” The resistance of the tenuous atmosphere thwarts the downright, rectilinear impulse, and forces the staff into the curves which symbolize the perfection of form.

But Seraphita affirms that the curve is really the inferior symbol; that it belongs to and expresses the Finite; whereas the straight line pertains to the Infinite. How shall this paradox be explained? To the merely mortal understanding, nay, to that understand-

ing when raised to its highest power, the circle and the curve are and have ever been the symbols of the loftiest conceptions, the keys to the profoundest systems of thought. No doubt the line may be regarded mathematically as the sign of infinite extension, but it surely has little connection with Idealism, with Poetry, with Imagination, or Beauty, or Religion. With Duty it assuredly has clear and close affiliations, however, and that fact may well give us pause; for to comprehend Duty thoroughly is indeed to penetrate into arcana which, if such vision be possible to the finite, extend to the very threshold of infinity. There is nothing which so synthesizes and embraces Matter and Spirit as this same apprehension of Duty; and keeping fast hold of that idea we may perhaps be able to throw a little light upon Seraphita's meaning in the difficult passage under consideration. The ideal here concerned is indeed too little revered in these days. Yet it is as true as ever that "the path of duty is the way to glory," and that

"He that, ever following her commands,
On with toil of heart and knees and hands,
Thro' the long gorge to the far light has won
His path upward, and prevail'd,
Shall find the toppling crags of Duty scaled
Are close upon the shining table-lands
To which our God himself is moon and sun."

For "Duty, lov'd of Love" is the highest test of human aspiration, the surest measure of human progress, and it may well be that the straight line which is associated with and symbolizes it is in the final analysis an intima-

tion and a belonging of that supreme existence whose remoteness and majesty transcend conditioned thought, and on this plane can only be dimly perceived as the Something which metaphysical analysis feels compelled to postulate in partial explanation of the Knowable.

The Logos, the Point within the Circle, was not, as often mistakenly supposed, held by the students of the archaic doctrine to be the Supreme or Absolute. It was really but the symbol of the Manifested, — that of which the human mind can in some way take cognizance. The old theogonies avoid the perplexities and contradictions so strongly presented by Seraphita when examining the doubts which assail the sceptical Pastor, by postulating a First Cause beyond the actual Artificer of the Universe. So Porphyry (cited by Taylor) says: “To that God who is above all things, neither external speech ought to be addressed, nor yet that which is inward.” Thus Proclus speaks of the highest principle as “more ineffable than all silence, and more occult than all essence,” and as being “concealed amidst the intelligible gods.” This is the Ain-Soph of the Kabbala, — the name given it there being almost synonymous in meaning with the Unknowable of modern Agnosticism, though the latter professes to find the Logos equally inscrutable. Now it is conceivable that while the circle is, as Seraphita says, the symbol of the Created, the line may be that of the Uncreated, that is to say, the Infinite. The fact that to us who exist on this earthly plane the circle presents the most perfect figure does not appear a really serious obstacle to the

reception of this view ; for the circle might very well be the most perfect figure as related to Matter in all its modifications, or even as related to the lower spiritual spheres into which alone it may be supposed that incarnated spirit is capable of penetrating ; and yet it might not be adapted to that highest form of existence which is altogether above and beyond human apprehension. Either this is the interpretation to be put upon Seraphita's statement concerning the relations and symbolism of the line and the circle, or it must be concluded that Balzac has fallen into an error so gross that it is incredible it should have been committed by a student of occultism in every other particular so firmly grounded.

There is indeed no theory advanced in either of the philosophical romances of Balzac which cannot be traced to authorities and co-ordinated with some accepted doctrine. He never delivers himself over recklessly to his fancy in these works, and the smallest suggestion has a significance of its own. In the present instance he certainly appears to traverse even widely adopted esoteric teachings, but the more reasonable assumption must be that this contradiction is only apparent and not fundamental. It moreover evidently encloses a bold conception, and one which is calculated to exalt the character and convey a lofty idea of the powers and perceptions of Seraphita. Never does she tower more majestically over her interlocutors and companions than when she is delivering herself of this magnificent thought ; and nowhere are the capabilities and poten-

talities of humanity more strikingly and comprehensively suggested than in the intimation that man contains within himself an element which links him not alone with the highest heavens, but with that inscrutable, eternal power which transcends our conception of the celestial as much as that surpasses our material experience. The thought involved is indeed most noble. It is that the destiny of man connects him with an existence independent of and superior to all the changes which Matter can undergo; with an existence indissoluble by the termination either of Material or Spiritual universes; with an existence unaffected by *pralayas* and *manvantaras*, and which will bear him scathless through every catastrophe and cataclysm to which the formed and the formless worlds are said by Eastern occultism to be alike subject. The vista thus opened to the imagination is stupendous beyond question, but it may be explored boldly or timidly as the reader's inclinations and mental and spiritual tendencies determine.

The strictures of Seraphita upon the half-truths and fallacies of physical science may be studied profitably in connection with that critical work of Judge Stallo, "The Concepts and Theories of Modern Physics," which is cited in the Introduction to Louis Lambert. But the real uncertainty of many alleged scientific certainties is perhaps best shown in the mercilessly destructive criticism which rival men of science practise upon one another's theories and doctrines. The reference to "the greatest man among you" — who is said by

Seraphita, with rhetorical exaggeration, to have "died in despair" because toward the close of his life he realized the inadequacy of his favorite hypothesis to account for the universe — of course applies to Sir Isaac Newton, whose essay at interpretation of the Apocalypse caused his brother scientists to shrug their shoulders and lament the breaking down of that superb mind. Nor is it at all incredible that Newton should have been drawn to his Scriptural studies by recognition of the need for some such initiating and sustaining force in the universe as the old doctrine of the Logos supplies. It is certain, as has been pointed out before, that he was by no means so self-confident as his followers, and that in particular he entertained serious doubts as to the sufficiency of his theory of gravitation, — doubts, be it said, which modern research and scientific progress have strengthened instead of diminishing. Indeed, Seraphita might have reinforced her argument with many more instances of scientific mistakes and insufficient explanations. There are to-day few even of the theories commonly regarded as most firmly established which do not present difficulties hitherto insoluble, and which are not cautiously held by men of truly open minds as at the best provisional, — convenient working hypotheses, but not to be safely made the ground of definitive conclusions.

At the close of Seraphita's harangue her auditors withdraw, confounded; but the impression produced upon their minds rapidly fades, and the next morning the Pastor is once more prepared to find, in the pages

of his favorite Wier, a clue to the mysterious knowledge and argumentative powers of the young girl, whom he would fain regard as insane or under "possession." As Balzac cites Wier on several occasions in this book, and as he is an author probably not known to the generality of readers, it may be well to give some account of his writings, the more particularly as there is some special significance in the reference to his once celebrated work on witchcraft. John Wier was a learned physician of Cleves, who was the first to publish a protest against the wild witchcraft panic that in the sixteenth and many preceding centuries, caused a frightful slaughter of deluded and innocent victims throughout Europe. Wier's book, entitled "*De Præstigiis Dæmonum*," would not in the present day be regarded as anything but a grossly superstitious work. The author was indeed no less credulous than his contemporaries. He believed with them that the atmosphere swarmed with evil spirits, that a personal devil went around like a roaring lion, destroying souls, that all manner of miraculous events were continually occurring. In fact, he accepted all the evidence upon which Sprenger, Bodin, and the whole school of the Inquisition, founded their theories of witchcraft; but he interpreted the alleged phenomena differently, and more in accord with the scientific spirit. His explanation was that many of the so-called witches were lunatics, and that the majority of those said to be bewitched, together with many accused of sorcery, were simply possessed by the devil. The latter, he argued, had no

need to act indirectly through witches, when he could delude his victims directly, and he disposed of the witch theory by asserting that Satan put it into the heads of the possessed to denounce old women as witches, in order that as much mischief and suffering as possible might be caused. Wier was a humane man, — a rare phenomenon in his time, — and the tortures and burnings occurring everywhere revolted him. He was careful to declare his opinion that all real witches deserved the most severe punishment; but he was plainly doubtful whether there were any real witches.

Conservative and credulous as his book appears now, it created intense indignation among the believers in witchcraft, who were not merely the majority of men then living, but, which seems far stranger, the majority of the educated and (relatively) intelligent class. In proof of this, the fact may be cited that Wier's book was answered by John Bodin, in an equally remarkable work entitled "*De la Démonomanie des Sorciers.*" Bodin attacked Wier with ferocity, upholding the authority of the indorsers of witchcraft and denouncing the kindly doctor of Cleves as little better than an atheist and a heretic. Now Bodin, as Lecky observes in his "*History of Rationalism,*" was "esteemed by many of his contemporaries the ablest man who had then arisen in France, and the verdict has been but little qualified by later writers. Amid all the distractions of a dissipated and intriguing court, and all the labors of a judicial position, he had amassed an amount

of learning so vast and so various as to place him in the very first rank of the scholars of his nation. He has also the far higher merit of being one of the chief founders of political philosophy and political history, and of having anticipated on these subjects many of the conclusions of our own day." Yet there is no superstition, no legend, no absurd and preposterous invention, no wild and grotesque imagination, too difficult to be received and digested by this philosopher and sage. He relies absolutely upon authority. He never questions traditions. He never reasons upon matters of fact. He never exhibits for a single moment a tendency toward scientific investigation, comparison, and inference. He abuses Wier in the old-fashioned dogmatic, theological manner. He calls his book a "tissue of horrible blasphemies." He declares that it cannot be read "without righteous anger." Wier has "armed himself against God;" he has done his best to disseminate witchcraft, to support the kingdom of Satan, and so forth through many pages. Yet Wier had truly not advanced very far before his age. He held to most of the old barbarous doctrines, and among them to that of the superior innate frailty and depravity of women. He, in common with many others, had asked himself why so large a proportion of alleged witches were women; and he, in common with many others, explained the fact by asserting that they were so prone to evil that Satan found them an easy prey. Perhaps it was especially because of Wier's chapter upon the weaknesses and wickedness of women that

Balzac chose this author as the favorite authority of Pastor Becker.

In the twenty-seventh chapter of his sixth book he cites a long array of classical writers in support of the contention that women have always been specially addicted to the employment of poison as an agent of revenge or passion. In the sixth chapter of his third book he observes: "Le diable ennemi fin, ruzé et cauteleux, induit volontiers le sexe féminin, lequel est inconstant à raison de sa complexion, de legere croyance, malicieux, impatient, melancolique pour ne pouvoir commander à ses affections; et principalement les vieilles, débiles, stupides et d'esprit chancelant." This is why that Old Serpent addressed himself rather to Eve than to Adam; and this is why he so easily seduced Eve. The holy Saint Peter also has denominated them "weak vessels," and Saint Chrysostom has remarked, in his homily upon Matthew, that the female sex is imprudent and ductile, easily influenced and swayed, either from good to evil or from evil to good. He ventures into the difficult region of etymology in search of further proof, and discovers one in the derivation of the Latin *mulier* from *mollier* or *molli*, "which signifies softness." It may be conjectured that when Pastor Becker sought in the treatise of John Wier confirmation of his theory regarding Seraphita's inspiration, he had in mind the worthy doctor's views concerning women, and their special fitness as vehicles of diabolical influences. Pastor Becker refers, as a case in point, to the history of a young Italian girl who, at the age of

twelve, spoke forty-two languages, ancient and modern. Wier has a story of a Saxon woman, unable to read or write, who "being possessed by the devil" spoke in Latin and Greek, and prophesied concerning future events, — all of which came to pass. He also tells of an idiotic Italian woman who, being under the same infernal influence, and asked which was Virgil's finest verse, replied suddenly —

"Discite justitiam moniti et non temnere Divos."

It is an interesting point in these old ideas that the mediæval notions about women rested upon observation of the essential differences between the masculine and feminine natures; but external observation alone. To quote Lecky's admirable analysis of mediæval persecution again: "The question why the immense majority of those who were accused of sorcery should be women early attracted attention; and it was generally answered, not by the sensibility of their nervous constitution, and by their consequent liability to religious monomania and epidemics, but by the inherent wickedness of the sex. There was no subject on which the old writers expatiated with more indignant eloquence, or with more copious illustration," — of which we have just given an example in John Wier. Another instance of the horrible perversion of ideas which characterized those dark ages may be found in the interpretation given to the superior constancy of women in facing torture. The contemporary explanation of this was that the Devil provided all witches with means

of withstanding the torment; and the inevitable corollary of such reasoning was a stimulation of ingenuity in devising and applying more searching and cruel tortures to women. There can be no question that had Seraphita lived in the time of Wier and Bodin the former would have considered her a demoniac, and the latter would have denounced her as a witch, the only fit destiny of whom was the stake; and it may be that Balzac intended to hint at the contrast between mediæval and modern thought in introducing, in John Wier, the most signal, but at the same time narrow and feeble, illustration of sixteenth century liberalism.

The sixth chapter of "Seraphita" is chiefly occupied with the beautiful and noble discourse in which the dying mystic unfolds to her companions the secret of "the Path." Up to this time Wilfrid, who represents the Abstractive type, has failed to understand Seraphita. Earthly ambitions still burn fiercely in his breast. He cherishes what seem to him high thoughts of conquest. He would go to Central Asia and plot against the British supremacy in India. He would head such a formidable irruption of Asiatic tribes as Genghis Khan organized. He thinks that the prospect of sovereignty, of Oriental luxury and splendor, will tempt Seraphita, and he lays before her his far-reaching schemes and invites her to share his glory. But Seraphita smiles. There is for her no temptation in such offers. As she says, beings more powerful than Wilfrid have already sought to dazzle her with far greater gifts. Minna approaches with a more dangerous because a

purser and higher petition. She offers nothing but herself as a vicarious sufferer. Love raises her above the sphere of the Abstractive. Already the divine is shining through her envelope of flesh. Already the tender loyal heart has found the entrance to the Path by which alone the celestial sphere can be attained. Then the prophetic vision of Seraphita recognizes in these two the elements of Force and Love which, when purified by the discipline of patient suffering, will unite to constitute the relatively perfect Angelic entity. This is the meaning of the exclamation she utters in gazing upon Wilfrid and Minna before she begins her final address to them.

That address may be regarded as in some sense a recapitulation of all the doctrines indicated and shadowed forth in the preceding parts of the story. Once more, and now with large insistence, the doctrine of re-incarnation is dwelt upon, and referred to as the necessary and sole explanation of human evolution. Balzac here treats it more in detail than he has done elsewhere, although it is the basis of Seraphita's history, and makes intelligible the whole structure of her existence and theosophy. Seraphita traces existence from the Instinctive sphere upward. The lower life is occupied, she says, with exploitation of the purely material. It is there that the inevitable lust of possession has to be worked out. It is there that men toil and struggle to amass earthly treasures, and, having succeeded, slowly realize the uselessness of such riches. Matter must be exhausted before Spirit assumes control, and it may

happen that many existences are required to expend the craving for impermanent possessions. As a rule men indulge their lowest desires to satiety, and it is only when disgust overcomes them, when the emptiness of all mundane enjoyments is demonstrated by prolonged experiment, that they begin to seek a more excellent way. The long period of education is protracted still further by relapses and excesses. "A lifetime is often no more than sufficient to acquire virtues which balance the vices of the preceding existence." At length suffering brings love, and love self-sacrifice, and that aspiration, and aspiration, prayer; which is the direct bond of union between the finite and the infinite. It is indeed no new lesson. The directions for gaining the strait and narrow path have been vouchsafed to the sons of men in countless forms and ways, and with characteristic perseverance and malign ingenuity they have nullified their opportunities again and again by quarrelling over the phraseology and disputing the authority of the guide-books, while ignoring the significance of the essential harmony which subsists between all the rules laid down for the attainment of ultimate felicity and emancipation from evil. Yet the recognition of the superior attractions of the Divine can never be for all alike. For the souls still chained to Matter in the Instinctive sphere, for the majority even of the Abstractives, the allurements of the impermanent world must continue to be insuperable. It is only the minority who possess the courage to endure what follows every sincere movement of separation from the Material. The

latter, though in one sense but a condition of Spirit, is in its lower forms hostile to Spirit, and it resents its renunciation by the few who elect to enter the Path. Instinctive Man not only deliberately prefers his inferiority, but regards with positive enmity all who evince a desire to ascend in the scale of existence. This enmity is in part automatic and literally instinctive, and resembles the resistance which an air-breathing creature offers to immersion in the water. Instinctive Man cannot breathe nor live in the rarified atmosphere of the Divine, and feeling this he fights with all his strength against every attempt to raise him to that uninhabitable sphere. The Path once chosen, therefore, the pilgrim must make his account with persecution and scorn and ill-feeling. The world will not let him go at all willingly, and if he tear himself away will surely follow him with its sharp displeasure.

These two, however, — Wilfrid and Minna, — were, as Seraphita knows, prepared by previous incarnations to take the step which should separate them from the world ; and her final task is the application of the stimulus which shall determine them in entering upon their new and arduous career. As he listens to the seraphic eloquence of the mysterious being he has in vain tried to entangle in the meshes of an earthly love, Wilfrid feels his carnal impulses dying, and a purer, loftier aspiration takes their place. For the first time he begins to comprehend who and what Seraphita is. For the first time he is made to perceive the delusive character of his dreams of earthly glory and magnificence.

For the first time, also, he looks upon the human girl beside him with a feeling of respect and sympathy, and is drawn toward her by the attraction of a common yearning after the higher life. Then the work of Seraphita on the plane of humanity is finished, and in a final burst of rapture and adoration her spirit breaks the last fragile bonds uniting it to the body, and she rises into the celestial spheres to receive judgment, reward, whatever is awaiting her. The final chapter, entitled "The Assumption" by Balzac, is an exquisitely imagined vision. Wilfrid and Minna, kneeling by the body of Seraphita, are rapt into the heavens. For a time their spirits are permitted to leave their shells and traverse the lower fields of space, whence they are enabled to witness the splendor and majesty of their late companion's divine initiation. There is no need to follow or interpret this closing scene. It is only necessary to say that it fitly concludes a marvellous work; that notwithstanding the unavoidable employment of some conventional forms, the elevation, nobility, solemnity, and beauty of the whole picture render it a literary masterpiece, scarcely equalled and not surpassed by the most glowing conceptions of the greatest mystical poets.

So ends Balzac's philosophical trilogy. The human imagination, stretched to the utmost in sustaining these last and loftiest creations, can proceed no farther. The author has traced the evolution of the spirit from the natural to the divine world. Beyond the threshold of the latter it is not given to incarnated souls to pene-

trate save in vision, but the path which leads upward has been indicated with equal skill and subtlety, and some intimation has been given of the glories which attend translation to the celestial sphere. As a literary experiment “*Seraphita*” stands alone. It is bold, — some may think even to rashness, — but its beauty and spirituality must be admitted, and it crowns a difficult and laborious enterprise finely, harmoniously, and majestically.

GEORGE FREDERIC PARSONS.

SERAPHITA.



I.

SERAPHITUS.

As the eye glances over a map of the coasts of Norway, can the imagination fail to marvel at their fantastic indentations and serrated edges, like a granite lace, against which the surges of the North Sea roar incessantly? Who has not dreamed of the majestic sights ever to be seen on those beachless shores, of that multitude of creeks and inlets and little bays, no two of them alike, yet all trackless abysses? We may almost fancy that Nature took pleasure in recording by ineffaceable hieroglyphics the symbol of Norwegian life, bestowing on these coasts the conformation of a fish's spine, fishery being the staple commerce of the country, and well-nigh the only means of living of the hardy men who cling like tufts of lichen to the arid cliffs. Here, through fourteen degrees of longitude, barely seven hundred thousand souls maintain existence. Thanks to perils devoid of glory, to year-long snows which clothe the Norway peaks and guard them from profaning foot of traveller, these sublime beauties are

virgin still ; they will be seen to harmonize with human phenomena, also virgin — at least to poetry — which here took place, the history of which it is our purpose to relate.

If one of these inlets, mere fissures to the eyes of the eider-ducks, is wide enough for the sea not to freeze between the prison-walls of rock against which it surges, the country-people call the little bay a *fiord*, — a word which geographers of every nation have adopted into their respective languages. Though a certain resemblance exists among all these fiords, each has its own characteristics. The sea has everywhere forced its way as through a breach, yet the rocks about each fissure are diversely rent, and their tumultuous precipices defy the rules of geometric law. Here the scarp is dentelled like a saw ; there the narrow ledges barely allow the snow to lodge or the noble crests of the Northern pines to spread themselves ; farther on, some convulsion of Nature may have rounded a coquettish curve into a lovely valley flanked in rising terraces with black-plumed pines. Truly we are tempted to call this land the Switzerland of Ocean.

Midway between Trondhjem and Christiansand lies an inlet called the Ström-fiord. If the Ström-fiord is not the loveliest of these rocky landscapes, it has the merit of displaying the terrestrial grandeurs of Norway, and of enshrining the scenes of a history that is indeed celestial.

The general outline of the Ström-fiord seems at first sight to be that of a funnel washed out by the sea.

The passage which the waves have forced present to the eye an image of the eternal struggle between old Ocean and the granite rock, — two creations of equal power, one through inertia, the other by ceaseless motion. Reefs of fantastic shape run out on either side, and bar the way of ships and forbid their entrance. The intrepid sons of Norway cross these reefs on foot, springing from rock to rock, undismayed at the abyss — a hundred fathoms deep and only six feet wide — which yawns beneath them. Here a tottering block of gneiss falling athwart two rocks gives an uncertain footway; there the hunters or the fishermen, carrying their loads, have flung the stems of fir-trees in guise of bridges, to join the projecting reefs, around and beneath which the surges roar incessantly. This dangerous entrance to the little bay bears obliquely to the right with a serpentine movement, and there encounters a mountain rising some twenty-five hundred feet above sea-level, the base of which is a vertical palisade of solid rock more than a mile and a half long, the inflexible granite nowhere yielding to clefts or undulations until it reaches a height of two hundred feet above the water. Rushing violently in, the sea is driven back with equal violence by the inert force of the mountain to the opposite shore, gently curved by the spent force of the retreating waves.

The fiord is closed at the upper end by a vast gneiss formation crowned with forests, down which a river plunges in cascades, becomes a torrent when the snows are melting, spreads into a sheet of waters, and then

falls with a roar into the bay, — vomiting as it does so the hoary pines and the aged larches washed down from the forests and scarce seen amid the foam. These trees plunge headlong into the fiord and reappear after a time on the surface, clinging together and forming islets which float ashore on the beaches, where the inhabitants of a village on the left bank of the Ström-fiord gather them up, split, broken (though sometimes whole), and always stripped of bark and branches. The mountain which receives at its base the assaults of Ocean, and at its summit the buffeting of the wild North wind, is called the Falberg. Its crest, wrapped at all seasons in a mantle of snow and ice, is the sharpest peak of Norway; its proximity to the pole produces, at the height of eighteen hundred feet, a degree of cold equal to that of the highest mountains of the globe. The summit of this rocky mass, rising sheer from the fiord on one side, slopes gradually downward to the east, where it joins the declivities of the Sieg and forms a series of terraced valleys, the chilly temperature of which allows no growth but that of shrubs and stunted trees.

The upper end of the fiord, where the waters enter it as they come down from the forest, is called the Siegdahlen, — a word which may be held to mean “the shedding of the Sieg,” — the river itself receiving that name. The curving shore opposite to the face of the Falberg is the valley of Jarvis, — a smiling scene overlooked by hills clothed with firs, birch-trees, and larches, mingled with a few oaks and beeches, the richest coloring of all

the varied tapestries which Nature in these northern regions spreads upon the surface of her rugged rocks. The eye can readily mark the line where the soil, warmed by the rays of the sun, bears cultivation and shows the native growth of the Norwegian flora. Here the expanse of the fiord is broad enough to allow the sea, dashed back by the Falberg, to spend its expiring force in gentle murmurs upon the lower slope of these hills, — a shore bordered with finest sand, strewn with mica and sparkling pebbles, porphyry, and marbles of a thousand tints, brought from Sweden by the river floods, together with ocean waifs, shells, and flowers of the sea driven in by tempests, whether of the Pole or Tropics.

At the foot of the hills of Jarvis lies a village of some two hundred wooden houses, where an isolated population lives like a swarm of bees in a forest, without increasing or diminishing; vegetating happily, while wringing their means of living from the breast of a stern Nature. The almost unknown existence of the little hamlet is readily accounted for. Few of its inhabitants were bold enough to risk their lives among the reefs to reach the deep-sea fishing, — the staple industry of Norwegians on the least dangerous portions of their coast. The fish of the fiord were numerous enough to suffice, in part at least, for the sustenance of the inhabitants; the valley pastures provided milk and butter; a certain amount of fruitful, well-tilled soil yielded rye and hemp and vegetables, which necessity taught the people to protect against the severity of

the cold and the fleeting but terrible heat of the sun with the shrewd ability which Norwegians display in the two-fold struggle. The difficulty of communication with the outer world, either by land where the roads are impassable, or by sea where none but tiny boats can thread their way through the maritime defiles that guard the entrance to the bay, hinder these people from growing rich by the sale of their timber. It would cost enormous sums to either blast a channel out to sea or construct a way to the interior. The roads from Christiana to Trondhjem all turn toward the Ström-fiord, and cross the Sieg by a bridge some score of miles above its fall into the bay. The country to the north, between Jarvis and Trondhjem, is covered with impenetrable forests, while to the south the Falberg is nearly as much separated from Christiana by inaccessible precipices. The village of Jarvis might perhaps have communicated with the interior of Norway and Sweden by the river Sieg; but to do this and to be thus brought into contact with civilization, the Ström-fiord needed the presence of a man of genius. Such a man did actually appear there, — a poet, a Swede of great religious fervor, who died admiring, even reverencing this region as one of the noblest works of the Creator.

Minds endowed by study with an inward sight, and whose quick perceptions bring before the soul, as though painted on a canvas, the contrasting scenery of this universe, will now apprehend the general features of the Ström-fiord. They alone, perhaps, can thread their way through the tortuous channels of the

reef, or flee with the battling waves to the everlasting rebuff of the Falberg whose white peaks mingle with the vaporous clouds of the pearl-gray sky, or watch with delight the curving sheet of waters, or hear the rushing of the Sieg as it hangs for an instant in long fillets and then falls over a picturesque abatis of noble trees toppled confusedly together, sometimes upright, sometimes half-sunken beneath the rocks. It may be that such minds alone can dwell upon the smiling scenes nestling among the lower hills of Jarvis; where the luscious Northern vegetables spring up in families, in myriads, where the white birches bend, graceful as maidens, where colonnades of beeches rear their boles mossy with the growths of centuries, where shades of green contrast, and white clouds float amid the blackness of the distant pines, and tracts of many-tinted crimson and purple shrubs are shaded endlessly; in short, where blend all colors, all perfumes of a flora whose wonders are still ignored. Widen the boundaries of this limited amphitheatre, spring upward to the clouds, lose yourself among the rocks where the seals are lying and even then your thought cannot compass the wealth of beauty nor the poetry of this Norwegian coast. Can your thought be as vast as the ocean that bounds it? as weird as the fantastic forms drawn by these forests, these clouds, these shadows, these changeful lights?

Do you see above the meadows on that lowest slope which undulates around the higher hills of Jarvis two or three hundred houses roofed with "nøever," a sort

of thatch made of birch-bark, — frail houses, long and low, looking like silk-worms on a mulberry-leaf tossed hither by the winds? Above these humble, peaceful dwellings stands the church, built with a simplicity in keeping with the poverty of the villagers. A graveyard surrounds the chancel, and a little farther on you see the parsonage. Higher up, on a projection of the mountain is a dwelling-house, the only one of stone; for which reason the inhabitants of the village call it “the Swedish Castle.” In fact, a wealthy Swede settled in Jarvis about thirty years before this history begins, and did his best to ameliorate its condition. This little house, certainly not a castle, built with the intention of leading the inhabitants to build others like it, was noticeable for its solidity and for the wall that inclosed it, a rare thing in Norway where, notwithstanding the abundance of stone, wood alone is used for all fences, even those of fields. This Swedish house, thus protected against the climate, stood on rising ground in the centre of an immense courtyard. The windows were sheltered by those projecting pent-house roofs supported by squared trunks of trees which give so patriarchal an air to Northern dwellings. From beneath them the eye could see the savage nudity of the Falberg, or compare the infinitude of the open sea with the tiny drop of water in the foaming fiord; the ear could hear the flowing of the Sieg, whose white sheet far away looked motionless as it fell into its granite cup edged for miles around with glaciers, — in short, from this

vantage ground the whole landscape whereon our simple yet superhuman drama was about to be enacted could be seen and noted.

The winter of 1799-1800 was one of the most severe ever known to Europeans. The Norwegian sea was frozen in all the fiords, where, as a usual thing, the violence of the surf kept the ice from forming. A wind, whose effects were like those of the Spanish levanter, swept the ice of the Ström-fiord, driving the snow to the upper end of the gulf. Seldom indeed could the people of Jarvis see the mirror of frozen waters reflecting the colors of the sky; a wondrous sight in the bosom of these mountains when all other aspects of nature are levelled beneath successive sheets of snow, and crests and valleys are alike mere folds of the vast mantle flung by winter across a landscape at once so mournfully dazzling and so monotonous. The falling volume of the Sieg, suddenly frozen, formed an immense arcade beneath which the inhabitants might have crossed under shelter from the blast had any dared to risk themselves inland. But the dangers of every step away from their own surroundings kept even the boldest hunters in their homes, afraid lest the narrow paths along the precipices, the clefts and fissures among the rocks, might be unrecognizable beneath the snow.

Thus it was that no human creature gave life to the white desert where Boreas reigned, his voice alone resounding at distant intervals. The sky, nearly always gray, gave tones of polished steel to the ice of

the fiord. Perchance some ancient eider-duck crossed the expanse, trusting to the warm down beneath which dream, in other lands, the luxurious rich, little knowing of the dangers through which their luxury has come to them. Like the Bedouin of the desert who darts alone across the sands of Africa, the bird is neither seen nor heard; the torpid atmosphere, deprived of its electrical conditions, echoes neither the whirr of its wings nor its joyous notes. Besides, what human eye was strong enough to bear the glitter of those pinnacles adorned with sparkling crystals, or the sharp reflections of the snow, iridescent on the summits in the rays of a pallid sun which infrequently appeared, like a dying man seeking to make known that he still lives. Often, when the flocks of gray clouds, driven in squadrons athwart the mountains and among the tree-tops, hid the sky with their triple veils Earth, lacking the celestial lights, lit herself by herself.

Here, then, we meet the majesty of Cold, seated eternally at the pole in that regal silence which is the attribute of all absolute monarchy. Every extreme principle carries with it an appearance of negation and the symptoms of death; for is not life the struggle of two forces? Here in this Northern nature nothing lived. One sole power — the unproductive power of ice — reigned unchallenged. The roar of the open sea no longer reached the deaf, dumb inlet, where during one short season of the year Nature made haste to produce the slender harvests necessary for the food of the patient people. A few tall pine-trees lifted their black

pyramids garlanded with snow, and the form of their long branches and depending shoots completed the mourning garments of those solemn heights.

Each household gathered in its chimney-corner, in houses carefully closed from the outer air, and well supplied with biscuit, melted butter, dried fish, and other provisions laid in for the seven-months winter. The very smoke of these dwellings was hardly seen, half-hidden as they were beneath the snow, against the weight of which they were protected by long planks reaching from the roof and fastened at some distance to solid blocks on the ground, forming a covered way around each building.

During these terrible winter months the women spun and dyed the woollen stuffs and the linen fabrics with which they clothed their families, while the men read, or fell into those endless meditations which have given birth to so many profound theories, to the mystic dreams of the North, to its beliefs, to its studies (so full and so complete in one science, at least, sounded as with a plummet), to its manners and its morals, half-monastic, which force the soul to react and feed upon itself and make the Norwegian peasant a being apart among the peoples of Europe.

Such was the condition of the Ström-fiord in the first year of the nineteenth century and about the middle of the month of May.

On a morning when the sun burst forth upon this landscape, lighting the fires of the ephemeral diamonds produced by crystallizations of the snow and ice, two

beings crossed the fiord and flew along the base of the Falberg, rising thence from ledge to ledge toward the summit. What were they? human creatures, or two arrows? They might have been taken for eider-ducks sailing in consort before the wind. Not the boldest hunter nor the most superstitious fisherman would have attributed to human beings the power to move safely along the slender lines traced beneath the snow by the granite ledges, where yet this couple glided with the terrifying dexterity of somnambulists who, forgetting their own weight and the dangers of the slightest deviation, hurry along a ridge-pole and keep their equilibrium by the power of some mysterious force.

“Stop me, Seraphitus,” said a pale young girl, “and let me breathe. I look at you, you only, while scaling these walls of the gulf; otherwise, what would become of me? I am such a feeble creature. Do I tire you?”

“No,” said the being on whose arm she leaned. “But let us go on, Minna; the place where we are is not firm enough to stand on.”

Once more the snow creaked sharply beneath the long boards fastened to their feet, and soon they reached the upper terrace of the first ledge, clearly defined upon the flank of the precipice. The person whom Minna had addressed as Seraphitus threw his weight upon his right heel, arresting the plank — six and a half feet long and narrow as the foot of a child — which was fastened to his boot by a double thong of leather. This plank, two inches thick, was covered with reindeer skin, which bristled against the snow when the foot was raised, and

served to stop the wearer. Seraphitus drew in his left foot, furnished with another "skee," which was only two feet long, turned swiftly where he stood, caught his timid companion in his arms, lifted her in spite of the long boards upon her feet, and placed her on a projecting rock from which he brushed the snow with his pelisse.

"You are safe there, Minna; you can tremble at your ease."

"We are a third of the way up the Ice-Cap," she said, looking at the peak to which she gave the popular name by which it is known in Norway; "I can hardly believe it."

Too much out of breath to say more, she smiled at Seraphitus, who, without answering, laid his hand upon her heart and listened to its sounding throbs, rapid as those of a frightened bird.

"It often beats as fast when I run," she said.

Seraphitus inclined his head with a gesture that was neither coldness nor indifference, and yet, despite the grace which made the movement almost tender, it none the less bespoke a certain negation, which in a woman would have seemed an exquisite coquetry. Seraphitus clasped the young girl in his arms. Minna accepted the caress as an answer to her words, continuing to gaze at him. As he raised his head, and threw back with impatient gesture the golden masses of his hair to free his brow, he saw an expression of joy in the eyes of his companion.

"Yes, Minna," he said in a voice whose paternal

accents were charming from the lips of a being who was still adolescent, "Keep your eyes on me; do not look below you."

"Why not?" she asked.

"You wish to know why? then look!"

Minna glanced quickly at her feet and cried out suddenly like a child who sees a tiger. The awful sensation of abysses seized her; one glance sufficed to communicate its contagion. The fiord, eager for food, bewildered her with its loud voice ringing in her ears, interposing between herself and life as though to devour her more surely. From the crown of her head to her feet and along her spine an icy shudder ran; then suddenly intolerable heat suffused her nerves, beat in her veins and overpowered her extremities with electric shocks like those of the torpedo. Too feeble to resist, she felt herself drawn by a mysterious power to the depths below, wherein she fancied that she saw some monster belching its venom, a monster whose magnetic eyes were charming her, whose open jaws appeared to craunch their prey before they seized it.

"I die, my Seraphitus, loving none but thee," she said, making a mechanical movement to fling herself into the abyss.

Seraphitus breathed softly on her forehead and eyes. Suddenly, like a traveller relaxed after a bath, Minna forgot these keen emotions, already dissipated by that caressing breath which penetrated her body and filled it with balsamic essences as quickly as the breath itself had crossed the air.

“Who art thou?” she said, with a feeling of gentle terror. “Ah, but I know! thou art my life. How canst thou look into that gulf and not die?” she added presently.

Seraphitus left her clinging to the granite rock and placed himself at the edge of the narrow platform on which they stood, whence his eyes plunged to the depths of the fiord, defying its dazzling invitation. His body did not tremble, his brow was white and calm as that of a marble statue, — an abyss facing an abyss.

“Seraphitus! dost thou not love me? come back!” she cried. “Thy danger renews my terror. Who art thou to have such superhuman power at thy age?” she asked as she felt his arms inclosing her once more.

“But, Minna,” answered Seraphitus, “you look fearlessly at greater spaces far than that.”

Then with raised finger, this strange being pointed upward to the blue dome, which parting clouds left clear above their heads, where stars could be seen in open day by virtue of atmospheric laws as yet unstudied.

“But what a difference!” she answered smiling.

“You are right,” he said; “we are born to stretch upward to the skies. Our native land, like the face of a mother, cannot terrify her children.”

His voice vibrated through the being of his companion, who made no reply.

“Come! let us go on,” he said.

The pair darted forward along the narrow paths traced back and forth upon the mountain, skimming

from terrace to terrace, from line to line, with the rapidity of a barb, that bird of the desert. Presently they reached an open space, carpeted with turf and moss and flowers, where no foot had ever trod.

“Oh, the pretty sæter!” cried Minna, giving to the upland meadow its Norwegian name. “But how comes it here, at such a height?”

“Vegetation ceases here, it is true,” said Seraphitus. “These few plants and flowers are due to that sheltering rock which protects the meadow from the polar winds. Put that tuft in your bosom, Minna,” he added, gathering a flower, — “that balmy creation which no eye has ever seen; keep the solitary matchless flower in memory of this one matchless morning of your life. You will find no other guide to lead you again to this sæter.”

So saying, he gave her the hybrid plant his falcon eye had seen amid the tufts of gentian acaulis and saxifrages, — a marvel, brought to bloom by the breath of angels. With girlish eagerness Minna seized the tufted plant of transparent green, vivid as emerald, which was formed of little leaves rolled trumpet-wise, brown at the smaller end but changing tint by tint to their delicately notched edges, which were green. These leaves were so tightly pressed together that they seemed to blend and form a mat or cluster of rosettes. Here and there from this green ground rose pure white stars edged with a line of gold, and from their throats came crimson anthers but no pistils. A fragrance, blended of roses and of orange-blossoms, yet ethereal and fugitive, gave some-

thing as it were celestial to that mysterious flower, which Seraphitus sadly contemplated, as though it uttered plaintive thoughts which he alone could understand. But to Minna this mysterious phenomenon seemed a mere caprice of nature giving to stone the freshness, softness, and perfume of plants.

“Why do you call it matchless? can it not reproduce itself? she asked, looking at Seraphitus, who colored and turned away.

“Let us sit down,” he said presently; “look below you, Minna. See! At this height you will have no fear. The abyss is so far beneath us that we no longer have a sense of its depths; it acquires the perspective uniformity of ocean, the vagueness of clouds, the soft coloring of the sky. See, the ice of the fiord is a turquoise, the dark pine forests are mere threads of brown; for us all abysses should be thus adorned.”

Seraphitus said the words with that fervor of tone and gesture seen and known only by those who have ascended the highest mountains of the globe, — a fervor so involuntarily acquired that the haughtiest of men is forced to regard his guide as a brother, forgetting his own superior station till he descends to the valleys and the abodes of his kind. Seraphitus unfastened the skees from Minna’s feet, kneeling before her. The girl did not notice him, so absorbed was she in the marvellous view now offered of her native land, whose rocky outlines could here be seen at a glance. She felt, with deep emotion, the solemn permanence of those frozen summits, to which words could give no adequate utterance.

"We have not come here by human power alone," she said, clasping her hands. "But perhaps I dream."

"You think that facts the causes of which you cannot perceive are supernatural," replied her companion.

"Your replies," she said, "always bear the stamp of some deep thought. When I am near you I understand all things without an effort. Ah, I am free!"

"If so, you will not need your skees," he answered.

"Oh!" she said; "I who would fain unfasten yours and kiss your feet!"

"Keep such words for Wilfrid," said Seraphitus, gently.

"Wilfrid!" cried Minna angrily; then, softening as she glanced at her companion's face and trying, but in vain, to take his hand, she added, "You are never angry, never; you are so hopelessly perfect in all things."

"From which you conclude that I am unfeeling."

Minna was startled at this lucid interpretation of her thought.

"You prove to me, at any rate, that we understand each other," she said, with the grace of a loving woman.

Seraphitus softly shook his head and looked sadly and gently at her.

"You, who know all things," said Minna, "tell me why it is that the timidity I felt below is over now that I have mounted higher. Why do I dare to look at you for the first time face to face, while lower down I scarcely dared to give a furtive glance?"

“ Perhaps because we are withdrawn from the pettiness of earth,” he answered, unfastening his pelisse.

“ Never, never have I seen you so beautiful ! ” cried Minna, sitting down on a mossy rock and losing herself in contemplation of the being who had now guided her to a part of the peak hitherto supposed to be inaccessible.

Never, in truth, had Seraphitus shone with so bright a radiance, — the only word that can render the illumination of his face and the aspect of his whole person. Was this splendor due to the lustre which the pure air of mountains and the reflections of the snow give to the complexion? Was it produced by the inward impulse which excites the body at the instant when exertion is arrested? Did it come from the sudden contrast between the glory of the sun and the darkness of the clouds, from whose shadow the charming couple had just emerged? Perhaps to all these causes we may add the effect of a phenomenon, one of the noblest which human nature has to offer. If some able physiologist had studied this being (who, judging by the pride on his brow and the lightning in his eyes seemed a youth of about seventeen years of age), and if the student had sought for the springs of that beaming life beneath the whitest skin that ever the North bestowed upon her offspring, he would undoubtedly have believed either in some phosphoric fluid of the nerves shining beneath the cuticle, or in the constant presence of an inward luminary, whose rays issued through the being of Seraphitus like a light through an alabaster vase. Soft and slen-

der as were his hands, ungloved to remove his companion's snow-shoes, they seemed possessed of a strength equal to that which the Creator gave to the diaphanous tentacles of the crab. The fire darting from his vivid glance seemed to struggle with the beams of the sun, not to take but to give them light. His body, slim and delicate as that of a woman, gave evidence of one of those natures which are feeble apparently, but whose strength equals their will, rendering them at times powerful. Of medium height, Seraphitus appeared to grow in stature as he turned fully round and seemed about to spring upward. His hair, curled by a fairy's hand and waving to the breeze, increased the illusion produced by this aerial attitude ; yet his bearing, wholly without conscious effort, was the result far more of a moral phenomenon than of a corporal habit.

Minna's imagination seconded this illusion, under the dominion of which all persons would assuredly have fallen, — an illusion which gave to Seraphitus the appearance of a vision dreamed of in happy sleep. No known type conveys an image of that form so majestically male to Minna, but which to the eyes of a man would have eclipsed in womanly grace the fairest of Raphael's creations. That painter of heaven has ever put a tranquil joy, a loving sweetness, into the lines of his angelic conceptions ; but what soul, unless it contemplated Seraphitus himself, could have conceived the ineffable emotions imprinted on his face? Who would have divined, even in the dreams of artists, where all things become possible, the shadow cast by

some mysterious awe upon that brow, shining with intellect, which seemed to question Heaven and to pity Earth? The head hovered awhile disdainfully, as some majestic bird whose cries reverberate on the atmosphere, then bowed itself resignedly, like the turtledove uttering soft notes of tenderness in the depths of the silent woods. His complexion was of marvellous whiteness, which brought out vividly the coral lips, the brown eyebrows, and the silken lashes, the only colors that trenched upon the paleness of that face, whose perfect regularity did not detract from the grandeur of the sentiments expressed in it; nay, thought and emotion were reflected there, without hindrance or violence, with the majestic and natural gravity which we delight in attributing to superior beings. That face of purest marble expressed in all things strength and peace.

Minna rose to take the hand of Seraphitus, hoping thus to draw him to her, and to lay on that seductive brow a kiss given more from admiration than from love; but a glance at the young man's eyes, which pierced her as a ray of sunlight penetrates a prism, paralyzed the young girl. She felt, but without comprehending, a gulf between them; then she turned away her head and wept. Suddenly a strong hand seized her by the waist and a soft voice said to her: "Come!" She obeyed, resting her head, suddenly revived, upon the heart of her companion, who, regulating his step to hers with gentle and attentive conformity, led her to a spot whence they could see the radiant glories of the polar Nature.

“Before I look, before I listen to you, tell me, Seraphitus, why you repulse me. Have I displeased you? and how? tell me! I want nothing for myself; I would that all my earthly goods were yours, for the riches of my heart are yours already. I would that light came to my eyes only through your eyes just as my thought is born of your thought. I should not then fear to offend you, for I should give you back the echoes of your soul, the words of your heart, day by day, — as we render to God the meditations with which his spirit nourishes our minds. I would be thine alone.”

“Minna, a constant desire is that which shapes our future. Hope on! But if you would be pure in heart mingle the idea of the All-Powerful with your affections here below; then you will love all creatures, and your heart will rise to heights indeed.”

“I will do all you tell me,” she answered, lifting her eyes to his with a timid movement.

“I cannot be your companion,” said Seraphitus sadly.

He seemed to repress some thoughts, then stretched his arms towards Christiana, just visible like a speck on the horizon and said: —

“Look!”

“We are very small,” she said.

“Yes, but we become great through feeling and through intellect,” answered Seraphitus. “With us, and us alone, Minna, begins the knowledge of things; the little that we learn of the laws of the visible world

enables us to apprehend the immensity of the worlds invisible. I know not if the time has come to speak thus to you, but I would, ah, I would communicate to you the flame of my hopes! Perhaps we may one day be together in the world where Love never dies."

"Why not here and now?" she said, murmuring.

"Nothing is stable here," he said, disdainfully. "The passing joys of earthly love are gleams which reveal to certain souls the coming of joys more durable; just as the discovery of a single law of nature leads certain privileged beings to a conception of the system of the universe. Our fleeting happiness here below is the forerunning proof of another and a perfect happiness, just as the earth, a fragment of the world, attests the universe. We cannot measure the vast orbit of the Divine thought of which we are but an atom as small as God is great; but we can feel its vastness, we can kneel, adore, and wait. Men ever mislead themselves in science by not perceiving that all things on their globe are related and co-ordinated to the general evolution, to a constant movement and production which bring with them, necessarily, both advancement and an End. Man himself is not a finished creation; if he were, God would not Be."

"How is it that in thy short life thou hast found the time to learn so many things?" said the young girl.

"I remember," he replied.

"Thou art nobler than all else I see."

"We are the noblest of God's great works. Has He

not given us the faculty of reflecting on Nature ; of gathering it within us by thought ; of making it a footstool and stepping-stone from and by which to rise to Him ? We love according to the greater or the lesser portion of heaven our souls contain. But do not be unjust, Minna ; behold the magnificence spread before you. Ocean expands at your feet like a carpet ; the mountains resemble amphitheatres ; heaven's ether is above them like the arching folds of a stage curtain. Here we may breathe the thoughts of God, as it were like a perfume. See ! the angry billows which engulf the ships laden with men seem to us, where we are, mere bubbles ; and if we raise our eyes and look above, all there is blue. Behold that diadem of stars ! Here the tints of earthly impressions disappear ; standing on this nature rarefied by space do you not feel within you something deeper far than mind, grander than enthusiasm, of greater energy than will ? Are you not conscious of emotions whose interpretation is no longer in us ? Do you not feel your pinions ? Let us pray."

Seraphitus knelt down and crossed his hands upon his breast, while Minna fell, weeping, on her knees. Thus they remained for a time, while the azure dome above their heads grew larger and strong rays of light enveloped them without their knowledge.

"Why dost thou not weep when I weep?" said Minna, in a broken voice.

"They who are all spirit do not weep," replied Seraphitus rising ; "Why should I weep ? I see no longer

human wretchedness. Here, Good appears in all its majesty. There, beneath us, I hear the supplications and the wailings of that harp of sorrows which vibrates in the hands of captive souls. Here, I listen to the choir of harps harmonious. There, below, is hope, the glorious inception of faith ; but here is faith — it reigns, hope realized ! ”

“ You will never love me ; I am too imperfect ; you disdain me,” said the young girl.

“ Minna, the violet hidden at the feet of the oak whispers to itself : ‘ The sun does not love me ; he comes not. ’ The sun says : ‘ If my rays shine upon her she will perish, poor flower. ’ Friend of the flower, he sends his beams through the oak leaves, he veils, he tempers them, and thus they color the petals of his beloved. I have not veils enough, I fear lest you see me too closely ; you would tremble if you knew me better. Listen : I have no taste for earthly fruits. Your joys, I know them all too well, and, like the sated emperors of pagan Rome, I have reached disgust of all things ; I have received the gift of vision. Leave me ! abandon me ! ” he murmured, sorrowfully.

Seraphitus turned and seated himself on a projecting rock, dropping his head upon his breast.

“ Why do you drive me to despair ? ” said Minna.

“ Go, go ! ” cried Seraphitus, “ I have nothing that you want of me. Your love is too earthly for my love. Why do you not love Wilfrid ? Wilfrid is a man, tested by passions ; he would clasp you in his vigorous arms and make you feel a hand both broad and strong. His

hair is black, his eyes are full of human thoughts, his heart pours lava in every word he utters ; he could kill you with caresses. Let him be your beloved, your husband ! Yes, thine be Wilfrid ! ”

Minna wept aloud.

“ Dare you say that you do not love him ? ” he went on, in a voice which pierced her like a dagger.

“ Have mercy, have mercy, my Seraphitus ! ”

“ Love him, poor child of Earth to which thy destiny has indissolubly bound thee,” said the strange being, beckoning Minna by a gesture, and forcing her to the edge of the sæter, whence he pointed downward to a scene that might well inspire a young girl full of enthusiasm with the fancy that she stood above this earth.

“ I longed for a companion to the kingdom of Light ; I wished to show you that morsel of mud, I find you bound to it. Farewell. Remain on earth ; enjoy through the senses ; obey your nature ; turn pale with pallid men ; blush with women ; sport with children ; pray with the guilty ; raise your eyes to heaven when sorrows overtake you ; tremble, hope, throb in all your pulses ; you will have a companion ; you can laugh and weep, and give and receive. I, — I am an exile, far from heaven ; a monster, far from earth. I live of myself and by myself. I feel by the spirit ; I breathe through my brow ; I see by thought ; I die of impatience and of longing. No one here below can fulfil my desires or calm my griefs. I have forgotten how to weep. I am alone. I resign myself, and I wait.”

Seraphitus looked at the flowery mound on which he had seated Minna; then he turned and faced the frowning heights, whose pinnacles were wrapped in clouds; to them he cast, unspoken, the remainder of his thoughts.

“Minna, do you hear those delightful strains?” he said after a pause, with the voice of a dove, for the eagle’s cry was hushed; “it is like the music of those Eolian harps your poets hang in forests and on the mountains. Do you see the shadowy figures passing among the clouds, the wingèd feet of those who are making ready the gifts of heaven? They bring refreshment to the soul; the skies are about to open and shed the flowers of spring upon the earth. See, a gleam is darting from the pole. Let us fly, let us fly! It is time we go!”

In a moment their skees were refastened, and the pair descended the Falberg by the steep slopes which join the mountain to the valleys of the Sieg. Miraculous perception guided their course, or, to speak more properly, their flight. When fissures covered with snow intercepted them, Seraphitus caught Minna in his arms and darted with rapid motion, lightly as a bird, over the crumbling causeways of the abyss. Sometimes, while propelling his companion, he deviated to the right or left to avoid a precipice, a tree, a projecting rock, which he seemed to see beneath the snow, as an old sailor, familiar with the ocean, discerns the hidden reefs by the color, the trend, or the eddying of the water. When they reached the paths of the

Siegdahlen, where they could fearlessly follow a straight line to regain the ice of the fiord, Seraphitus stopped Minna.

“You have nothing to say to me?” he asked.

“I thought you would rather think alone,” she answered respectfully.

“Let us hasten, Minette; it is almost night,” he said.

Minna quivered as she heard the voice, now so changed, of her guide, — a pure voice, like that of a young girl, which dissolved the fantastic dream through which she had been passing. Seraphitus seemed to be laying aside his male force and the too keen intellect that flamed from his eyes. Presently the charming pair glided across the fiord and reached the snow-field which divides the shore from the first range of houses; then, hurrying forward as daylight faded, they sprang up the hill toward the parsonage, as though they were mounting the steps of a great staircase.

“My father must be anxious,” said Minna.

“No,” answered Seraphitus.

As he spoke the couple reached the porch of the humble dwelling where Monsieur Becker, the pastor of Jarvis, sat reading while awaiting his daughter for the evening meal.

“Dear Monsieur Becker,” said Seraphitus, “I have brought Minna back to you safe and sound.”

“Thank you, mademoiselle,” said the old man, laying his spectacles on his book; “you must be very tired.”

“ Oh, no,” said Minna, and as she spoke she felt the soft breath of her companion on her brow.

“ Dear heart, will you come day after to-morrow evening and take tea with me?”

“ Gladly, dear.”

“ Monsieur Becker, you will bring her, will you not?”

“ Yes, mademoiselle.”

Seraphitus inclined his head with a pretty gesture, and bowed to the old pastor as he left the house. A few moments later he reached the great courtyard of the Swedish villa. An old servant, over eighty years of age, appeared in the portico bearing a lantern. Seraphitus slipped off his snow-shoes with the graceful dexterity of a woman, then darting into the salon he fell exhausted and motionless on a wide divan covered with furs.

“ What will you take?” asked the old man, lighting the immensely tall wax-candles that are used in Norway.

“ Nothing, David, I am too weary.”

Seraphitus unfastened his pelisse lined with sable, threw it over him, and fell asleep. The old servant stood for several minutes gazing with loving eyes at the singular being before him, whose sex it would have been difficult for any one at that moment to determine. Wrapped as he was in a formless garment, which resembled equally a woman's robe and a man's mantle, it was impossible not to fancy that the slender feet which hung at the side of the couch were those of a

woman, and equally impossible not to note how the forehead and the outlines of the head gave evidence of power brought to its highest pitch.

“She suffers, and she will not tell me,” thought the old man. “She is dying, like a flower wilted by the burning sun.”

And the old man wept.

II.

SERAPHITA.

LATER in the evening David re-entered the salon.

“I know who it is you have come to announce,” said Seraphita in a sleepy voice. “Wilfrid may enter.”

Hearing these words a man suddenly presented himself, crossed the room and sat down beside her.

“My dear Seraphita, are you ill?” he said. “You look paler than usual.”

She turned slowly towards him, tossing back her hair like a pretty woman whose aching head leaves her no strength even for complaint.

“I was foolish enough to cross the fiord with Minna,” she said. “We ascended the Falberg.”

“Do you mean to kill yourself?” he said with a lover’s terror.

“No, my good Wilfrid; I took the greatest care of your Minna.”

Wilfrid struck his hand violently on a table, rose hastily, and made several steps towards the door with an exclamation full of pain; then he returned and seemed about to remonstrate.

“Why this disturbance if you think me ill?” she said.

“Forgive me, have mercy!” he cried, kneeling beside her. “Speak to me harshly if you will; exact all that the cruel fancies of a woman lead you to imagine I least can bear; but oh, my beloved, do not doubt my love. You take Minna like an axe to hew me down. Have mercy!”

“Why do you say these things, my friend, when you know that they are useless?” she replied, with a look which grew in the end so soft that Wilfrid ceased to behold her eyes, but saw in their place a fluid light, the shimmer of which was like the last vibrations of an Italian song.

“Ah! no man dies of anguish!” he murmured.

“You are suffering?” she said in a voice whose intonations produced upon his heart the same effect as that of her look. “Would I could help you!”

“Love me as I love you.”

“Poor Minna!” she replied.

“Why am I unarmed!” exclaimed Wilfrid, violently.

“You are out of temper,” said Seraphita, smiling. “Come, have I not spoken to you like those Parisian women whose loves you tell of?”

Wilfrid sat down, crossed his arms, and looked gloomily at Seraphita. “I forgive you,” he said; “for you know not what you do.”

“You mistake,” she replied; “every woman from the days of Eve does good and evil knowingly.”

“I believe it;” he said.

“I am sure of it, Wilfrid. Our instinct is precisely that which makes us perfect. What you men learn, we feel.”

“Why, then, do you not feel how much I love you?”

“Because you do not love me.”

“Good God!”

“If you did, would you complain of your own sufferings?”

“You are terrible to-night, Seraphita. You are a demon.”

“No, but I am gifted with the faculty of comprehending, and it is awful. Wilfrid, sorrow is a lamp which illumines life.”

“Why did you ascend the Falberg?”

“Minna will tell you. I am too weary to talk. You must talk to me, — you who know so much, who have learned all things and forgotten nothing; you who have passed through every social test. Talk to me, amuse me, I am listening.”

“What can I tell you that you do not know? Besides, the request is ironical. You allow yourself no intercourse with social life; you trample on its conventions, its laws, its customs, sentiments, and sciences; you reduce them all to the proportions such things take when viewed by you beyond this universe.”

“Therefore you see, my friend, that I am not a woman. You do wrong to love me. What! am I to leave the ethereal regions of my pretended strength, make myself humbly small, cringe like the hapless females of all species, that you may lift me up? and then, when I, helpless and broken, ask you for help, when I need your arm, you will repulse me! No, we can never come to terms.”

“You are more maliciously unkind to-night than I have ever known you.”

“Unkind!” she said, with a look which seemed to blend all feelings into one celestial emotion, “no, I am ill, I suffer, that is all. Leave me, my friend; it is your manly right. We women should ever please you, entertain you, be gay in your presence and have no whims save those that amuse you. Come, what shall I do for you, friend? Shall I sing, shall I dance, though weariness deprives me of the use of voice and limbs? — Ah! gentlemen, be we on our deathbeds, we yet must smile to please you; you call that, methinks, your right. Poor women! I pity them. Tell me, you who abandon them when they grow old, is it because they have neither hearts nor souls? Wilfred, I am a hundred years old; leave me! leave me! go to Minna!”

“Oh, my eternal love!”

“Do you know the meaning of eternity? Be silent, Wilfrid. You desire me, but you do not love me. Tell me, do I not seem to you like those coquettish Parisian women?”

“Certainly I no longer find you the pure celestial maiden I first saw in the church of Jarvis.”

At these words Seraphita passed her hands across her brow, and when she removed them Wilfrid was amazed at the saintly expression that overspread her face.

“You are right, my friend,” she said; “I do wrong whenever I set my feet upon your earth.”

“Oh, Seraphita, be my star! stay where you can ever bless me with that clear light!”

As he spoke, he stretched forth his hand to take that of the young girl, but she withdrew it, neither disdainfully nor in anger. Wilfrid rose abruptly and walked to the window that she might not see the tears that rose to his eyes.

“Why do you weep?” she said. “You are not a child, Wilfrid. Come back to me. I wish it. You are annoyed if I show just displeasure. You see that I am fatigued and ill, yet you force me to think and speak, and listen to persuasions and ideas that weary me. If you had any real perception of my nature, you would have made some music, you would have lulled my feelings — but no, you love me for yourself and not for myself.”

The storm which convulsed the young man’s heart calmed down at these words. He slowly approached her, letting his eyes take in the seductive creature who lay exhausted before him, her head resting in her hand and her elbow on the couch.

“You think that I do not love you,” she resumed. “You are mistaken. Listen to me, Wilfrid. You are beginning to know much; you have suffered much. Let me explain your thoughts to you. You wished to take my hand just now;” she rose to a sitting posture, and her graceful motions seemed to emit light. “When a young girl allows her hand to be taken it is as though she made a promise, is it not? and ought she not to fulfil it? You well know that I cannot be yours.

Two sentiments divide and inspire the love of all the women of the earth. Either they devote themselves to suffering, degraded, and criminal beings whom they desire to console, uplift, redeem; or they give themselves to superior men, sublime and strong, whom they adore and seek to comprehend, and by whom they are often annihilated. You have been degraded, though now you are purified by the fires of repentance, and to-day you are once more noble; but I know myself too feeble to be your equal, and too religious to bow before any power but that On High. I may refer thus to your life, my friend, for we are in the North, among the clouds, where all things are abstractions."

"You stab me, Seraphita, when you speak like this. It wounds me to hear you apply the dreadful knowledge with which you strip from all things human the properties that time and space and form have given them, and consider them mathematically in the abstract, as geometry treats substances from which it extracts solidity."

"Well, I will respect your wishes, Wilfrid. Let the subject drop. Tell me what you think of this bearskin rug which my poor David has spread out."

"It is very handsome."

"Did you ever see me wear this *doucha greka*?"

She pointed to a pelisse made of cashmere and lined with the skin of the black fox, — the name she gave it signifying "warm to the soul."

"Do you believe that any sovereign has a fur that can equal it?" she asked.

“It is worthy of her who wears it.”

“And whom you think beautiful?”

“Human words do not apply to her. Heart to heart is the only language I can use.”

“Wilfred, you are kind to soothe my griefs with such sweet words — which you have said to others.”

“Farewell!”

“Stay. I love both you and Minna, believe me. To me you two are as one being. United thus you can be my brother or, if you will, my sister. Marry her; let me see you both happy before I leave this world of trial and of pain. My God! the simplest of women obtain what they ask of a lover; they whisper ‘Hush!’ and he is silent; ‘Die’ and he dies; ‘Love me afar’ and he stays at a distance, like courtiers before a king! All I desire is to see you happy, and you refuse me! Am I then powerless? — Wilfred, listen, come nearer to me. Yes, I should grieve to see you marry Minna but — when I am here no longer, then — promise me to marry her; heaven destined you for each other.”

“I listen to you with fascination, Seraphita. Your words are incomprehensible, but they charm me. What is it you mean to say?”

“You are right; I forget to be foolish, — to be the poor creature whose weaknesses gratify you. I torment you, Wilfrid. You came to these Northern lands for rest, you, worn-out by the impetuous struggle of genius unrecognized, you, weary with the patient toils of science, you, who well-nigh dyed your hands in crime and wore the fetters of human justice — ”

Wilfred dropped speechless on the carpet. Seraphita breathed softly on his forehead, and in a moment he fell asleep at her feet.

“Sleep! rest!” she said, rising.

She passed her hands over Wilfrid’s brow; then the following sentences escaped her lips, one by one, — all different in tone and accent, but all melodious, full of a Goodness that seemed to emanate from her head in vaporous waves, like the gleams the goddess chastely lays upon Endymion sleeping.

“I cannot show myself such as I am to thee, dear Wilfrid, — to thee who art strong.

“The hour is come; the hour when the effulgent lights of the future cast their reflections backward on the soul; the hour when the soul awakes into freedom.

“Now am I permitted to tell thee how I love thee. Dost thou not see the nature of my love, a love without self-interest; a sentiment full of thee, thee only; a love which follows thee into the future to light that future for thee — for it is the one True Light. Canst thou now conceive with what ardor I would have thee leave this life which weighs thee down, and behold thee nearer than thou art to that world where Love is never-failing? Can it be aught but suffering to love for one life only? Hast thou not felt a thirst for the eternal love? Dost thou not feel the bliss to which a creature rises when, with twin-soul, it loves the Being who betrays not love, Him before whom we kneel in adoration?

“Would I had wings to cover thee, Wilfred; power to give thee strength to enter now into that world where

all the purest joys of purest earthly attachments are but shadows in the Light that shines, unceasing, to illumine and rejoice all hearts.

“Forgive a friendly soul for showing thee the picture of thy sins, in the charitable hope of soothing the sharp pangs of thy remorse. Listen to the pardoning choir; refresh thy soul in the dawn now rising for thee beyond the night of death. Yes, thy life, thy true life is there!

“May my words now reach thee clothed in the glorious forms of dreams; may they deck themselves with images glowing and radiant as they hover round you. Rise, rise, to the height where men can see themselves distinctly, pressed together though they be like grains of sand upon a sea-shore. Humanity rolls out like a many-colored ribbon. See the diverse shades of that flower of the celestial gardens. Behold the beings who lack intelligence, those who begin to receive it, those who have passed through trials, those who love, those who follow wisdom and aspire to the regions of Light!

“Canst thou comprehend, through this thought made visible, the destiny of humanity? — whence it came, whither it goeth? Continue steadfast in the Path. Reaching the end of thy journey thou shalt hear the clarions of omnipotence sounding the cries of victory in chords of which a single one would shake the earth, but which are lost in the spaces of a world that hath neither east nor west.

“Canst thou comprehend, my poor beloved Tried-one,

that unless the torpor and the veils of sleep had wrapped thee, such sights would rend and bear away thy mind as the whirlwinds rend and carry into space the feeble sails, depriving thee forever of thy reason? Dost thou understand that the Soul itself, raised to its utmost power can scarcely endure in dreams the burning communications of the Spirit?

“Speed thy way through the luminous spheres ; behold, admire, hasten ! Flying thus thou canst pause or advance without weariness. Like other men, thou wouldst fain be plunged forever in these spheres of light and perfume where now thou art, free of thy swooning body, and where thy thought alone has utterance. Fly ! enjoy for a fleeting moment the wings thou shalt surely win when Love has grown so perfect in thee that thou hast no senses left ; when thy whole being is all mind, all love. The higher thy flight the less canst thou see the abysses. There are none in heaven. Look at the friend who speaks to thee ; she who holds thee above this earth in which are all abysses. Look, behold, contemplate me yet a moment longer, for never again wilt thou see me, save imperfectly as the pale twilight of this world may show me to thee.”

Seraphita stood erect, her head with floating hair inclining gently forward, in that aerial attitude which great painters give to messengers from heaven ; the folds of her raiment fell with the same unspeakable grace which holds an artist — the man who translates all things into sentiment — before the exquisite well-known lines of Polyhymnia’s veil. Then she stretched forth her

hand. Wilfrid rose. When he looked at Seraphita she was lying on the bear's-skin, her head resting on her hand, her face calm, her eyes brilliant. Wilfrid gazed at her silently ; but his face betrayed a deferential fear in its almost timid expression.

" Yes, dear," he said at last, as though he were answering some question ; " we are separated by worlds. I resign myself ; I can only adore you. But what will become of me, poor and alone ! "

" Wilfrid, you have Minna."

He shook his head.

" Do not be so disdainful : woman understands all things through love ; what she does not understand she feels ; what she does not feel she sees ; when she neither sees, nor feels, nor understands, this angel of earth divines to protect you, and hides her protection beneath the grace of love."

" Seraphita, am I worthy to belong to a woman ? "

" Ah, now," she said, smiling, " you are suddenly very modest ; is it a snare ? A woman is always so touched to see her weakness glorified. Well, come and take tea with me the day after to-morrow evening ; good Monsieur Becker will be here, and Minna, the purest and most artless creature I have known on earth. Leave me now, my friend ; I need to make long prayers and expiate my sins."

" You, can you commit sin ? "

" Poor friend ! if we abuse our power, is not that the sin of pride ? I have been very proud to-day. Now leave me, till to-morrow."

“Till to-morrow,” said Wilfrid faintly, casting a long glance at the being of whom he desired to carry with him an ineffaceable memory.

Though he wished to go far away, he was held, as it were, outside the house for some moments, watching the light which shone from all the windows of the Swedish dwelling.

“What is the matter with me?” he asked himself. “No, she is not a mere creature, but a whole creation. Of her world, even through veils and clouds, I have caught echoes like the memory of sufferings healed, like the dazzling vertigo of dreams in which we hear the plaints of generations mingling with the harmonies of some higher sphere where all is Light and all is Love. Am I awake? Do I still sleep? Are these the eyes before which the luminous space retreated further and further indefinitely while the eyes followed it? The night is cold, yet my head is fire. I will go to the parsonage. With the pastor and his daughter I shall recover the balance of my mind.”

But still he did not leave the spot whence his eyes could plunge into Seraphita’s salon. The mysterious creature seemed to him the radiating centre of a luminous circle which formed an atmosphere about her wider than that of other beings; whoever entered it felt the compelling influence of, as it were, a vortex of dazzling light and all consuming thoughts. Forced to struggle against this inexplicable power, Wilfrid only prevailed after strong efforts; but when he reached and passed the inclosing wall of the courtyard, he regained

his freedom of will, walked rapidly towards the parsonage, and was soon beneath the high wooden arch which formed a sort of peristyle to Monsieur Becker's dwelling. He opened the first door, against which the wind had driven the snow, and knocked on the inner one, saying:—

“Will you let me spend the evening with you, Monsieur Becker?”

“Yes,” cried two voices, mingling their intonations.

Entering the parlor, Wilfrid returned by degrees to real life. He bowed affectionately to Minna, shook hands with Monsieur Becker, and looked about at the picture of a home which calmed the convulsions of his physical nature, in which a phenomenon was taking place analogous to that which sometimes seizes upon men who have given themselves up to protracted contemplations. If some strong thought bears upward on phantasmal wing a man of learning or a poet, isolates him from the external circumstances which environ him here below, and leads him forward through illimitable regions where vast arrays of facts become abstractions, where the greatest works of Nature are but images, then woe betide him if a sudden noise strikes sharply on his senses and calls his errant soul back to its prison-house of flesh and bones. The shock of the reunion of these two powers, body and mind, — one of which partakes of the unseen qualities of a thunderbolt, while the other shares with sentient nature that soft resistant force which defies destruction, — this shock, this struggle, or, rather let us say, this painful

meeting and co-mingling, gives rise to frightful sufferings. The body receives back the flame that consumes it; the flame has once more grasped its prey. This fusion, however, does not take place without convulsions, explosions, tortures; analogous and visible signs of which may be seen in chemistry, when two antagonistic substances which science has united separate.

For the last few days whenever Wilfrid entered Seraphita's presence his body seemed to fall away from him into nothingness. With a single glance this strange being led him in spirit through the spheres where meditation leads the learned man, prayer the pious heart, where vision transports the artist, and sleep the souls of men, — each and all have their own path to the Height, their own guide to reach it, their own individual sufferings in the dire return. In that sphere alone all veils are rent away, and the revelation, the awful flaming certainty of an unknown world, of which the soul brings back mere fragments to this lower sphere, stands revealed. To Wilfrid one hour passed with Seraphita was like the sought-for dreams of Theriakis, in which each knot of nerves becomes the centre of a radiating delight. But he left her bruised and wearied as some young girl endeavoring to keep step with a giant.

The cold air, with its stinging flagellations, had begun to still the nervous tremors which followed the reunion of his two natures, so powerfully disunited for a time; he was drawn towards the parsonage, then towards Minna, by the sight of the every-day home life for which he thirsted as the wandering European thirsts for his

native land when nostalgia seizes him amid the fairy scenes of Orient that have seduced his senses. More weary than he had ever yet been, Wilfrid dropped into a chair and looked about him for a time, like a man who awakes from sleep. Monsieur Becker and his daughter accustomed, perhaps, to the apparent eccentricity of their guest, continued the employments in which they were engaged.

The parlor was ornamented with a collection of the shells and insects of Norway. These curiosities, admirably arranged on a background of the yellow pine which panelled the room, formed, as it were, a rich tapestry to which the fumes of tobacco had imparted a mellow tone. At the further end of the room, opposite to the door, was an immense wrought-iron stove, carefully polished by the serving-woman till it shone like burnished steel. Seated in a large tapestried armchair near the stove, before a table, with his feet in a species of muff, Monsieur Becker was reading a folio volume which was propped against a pile of other books as on a desk. At his left stood a jug of beer and a glass, at his right burned a smoky lamp fed by some species of fish-oil. The pastor seemed about sixty years of age. His face belonged to a type often painted by Rembrandt; the same small bright eyes, set in wrinkles and surmounted by thick gray eyebrows; the same white hair escaping in snowy flakes from a black velvet cap; the same broad, bald brow, and a contour of face which the ample chin made almost square; and lastly, the same calm tranquillity, which, to an observer, denoted

the possession of some inward power, be it the supremacy bestowed by money, or the magisterial influence of the burgomaster, or the consciousness of art, or the cubic force of blissful ignorance. This fine old man, whose stout body proclaimed his vigorous health, was wrapped in a dressing-gown of rough gray cloth plainly bound. Between his lips was a meerschaum pipe, from which, at regular intervals, he blew the smoke, following with abstracted vision its fantastic wreathings, — his mind employed, no doubt, in assimilating through some meditative process the thoughts of the author whose works he was studying.

On the other side of the stove and near a door which communicated with the kitchen Minna was indistinctly visible in the haze of the good man's smoke, to which she was apparently accustomed. Beside her on a little table were the implements of household work, a pile of napkins, and another of socks waiting to be mended, also a lamp like that which shone on the white page of the book in which the pastor was absorbed. Her fresh young face, with its delicate outline, expressed an infinite purity which harmonized with the candor of the white brow and the clear blue eyes. She sat erect, turning slightly toward the lamp for better light, unconsciously showing as she did so the beauty of her waist and bust. She was already dressed for the night in a long robe of white cotton ; a cambric cap, without other ornament than a frill of the same, confined her hair. Though evidently plunged in some inward meditation, she counted without a mistake the threads of her

napkins or the meshes of her socks. Sitting thus, she presented the most complete image, the truest type, of the woman destined for terrestrial labor, whose glance may pierce the clouds of the sanctuary while her thought, humble and charitable, keeps her ever on the level of man.

Wilfrid had flung himself into a chair between the two tables and was contemplating with a species of intoxication this picture full of harmony, to which the clouds of smoke did no despite. The single window which lighted the parlor during the fine weather was now carefully closed. An old tapestry, used for a curtain and fastened to a stick, hung before it in heavy folds. Nothing in the room was picturesque, nothing brilliant; everything denoted rigorous simplicity, true heartiness, the ease of unconventional nature, and the habits of a domestic life which knew neither cares nor troubles. Many a dwelling is like a dream, the sparkle of passing pleasure seems to hide some ruin beneath the cold smile of luxury; but this parlor, sublime in reality, harmonious in tone, diffused the patriarchal ideas of a full and self-contained existence. The silence was unbroken save by the movements of the servant in the kitchen engaged in preparing the supper, and by the sizzling of the dried fish which she was frying in salt butter according to the custom of the country.

“Will you smoke a pipe?” said the pastor, seizing a moment when he thought that Wilfrid might listen to him.

“Thank you, no, dear Monsieur Becker,” replied the visitor.

"You seem to suffer more to-day than usual," said Minna, struck by the feeble tones of the stranger's voice.

"I am always so when I leave the château."

Minna quivered.

"A strange being lives there, Monsieur Becker," he continued after a pause. "For the six months that I have been in this village I have never yet dared to question you about her, and even now I do violence to my feelings in speaking of her. I began by keenly regretting that my journey in this country was arrested by the winter weather and that I was forced to remain here. But during the last two months chains have been forged and riveted which bind me irrevocably to Jarvis, till now I fear to end my days here. You know how I first met Seraphita, what impression her look and voice made upon me, and how at last I was admitted to her home where she receives no one. From the very first day I have longed to ask you the history of this mysterious being. On that day began, for me, a series of enchantments."

"Enchantments!" cried the pastor shaking the ashes of his pipe into an earthen-ware dish full of sand, "are there enchantments in these days?"

"You, who are carefully studying at this moment that volume of the 'Incantations' of Jean Wier, will surely understand the explanation of my sensations if I try to give it to you," replied Wilfrid. "If we study Nature attentively in its great evolutions as in its minutest works, we cannot fail to recognize the pos-

sibility of enchantment — giving to that word its exact significance. Man does not create forces ; he employs the only force that exists and which includes all others namely Motion, the breath incomprehensible of the sovereign Maker of the universe. Species are too distinctly separated for the human hand to mingle them. The only miracle of which man is capable is done through the conjunction of two antagonistic substances. Gunpowder for instance is germane to a thunderbolt. As to calling forth a creation, and a sudden one, all creation demands time, and time neither recedes nor advances at the word of command. So, in the world without us, plastic nature obeys laws the order and exercise of which cannot be interfered with by the hand of man. But after fulfilling, as it were, the function of Matter, it would be unreasonable not to recognize within us the existence of a gigantic power, the effects of which are so incommensurable that the known generations of men have never yet been able to classify them. I do not speak of man's faculty of abstraction, of constraining Nature to confine itself within the Word, — a gigantic act on which the common mind reflects as little as it does on the nature of Motion, but which, nevertheless, has led the Indian theosophists to explain creation by a word to which they give an inverse power. The smallest atom of their subsistence, namely, the grain of rice, from which a creation issues and in which alternately creation again is held, presented to their minds so perfect an image of the creative word, and

of the abstractive word, that to them it was easy to apply the same system to the creation of worlds. The majority of men content themselves with the grain of rice sown in the first chapter of all the Geneses. Saint John, when he said the Word was God only complicated the difficulty. But the fructification, germination, and efflorescence of our ideas is of little consequence if we compare that property, shared by many men, with the wholly individual faculty of communicating to that property, by some mysterious concentration, forces that are more or less active, of carrying it up to a third, a ninth, or a twenty-seventh power, of making it thus fasten upon the masses and obtain magical results by condensing the processes of nature.

“What I mean by enchantments,” continued Wilfrid after a moment’s pause, “are those stupendous actions taking place between two membranes in the tissue of the brain. We find in the unexplorable nature of the Spiritual World certain beings armed with these wondrous faculties, comparable only to the terrible power of certain gases in the physical world, beings who combine with other beings, penetrate them as active agents, and produce upon them witchcrafts, charms, against which these helpless slaves are wholly defenceless; they are, in fact, enchanted, brought under subjection, reduced to a condition of dreadful vassalage. Such mysterious beings overpower others with the sceptre and the glory of a superior nature, — acting upon them at times like the torpedo which electrifies or paralyzes the fisherman, at other times like a dose of phosphorus

which stimulates life and accelerates its propulsion; or again, like opium, which puts to sleep corporeal nature, disengages the spirit from every bond, enables it to float above the world and shows this earth to the spiritual eye as through a prism, extracting from it the food most needed; or, yet again, like catalepsy, which deadens all faculties for the sake of one only vision. Miracles, enchantments, incantations, witchcrafts, spells, and charms, in short, all those acts improperly termed supernatural, are only possible and can only be explained by the despotism with which some spirit compels us to feel the effects of a mysterious optic which increases, or diminishes, or exalts creation, moves within us as it pleases, deforms or embellishes all things to our eyes, tears us from heaven, or drags us to hell, — two terms by which men agree to express the two extremes of joy and misery.

“These phenomena are within us, not without us,” Wilfrid went on. “The being whom we call *Seraphita* seems to me one of those rare and terrible spirits to whom power is given to bind men, to crush nature, to enter into participation of the occult power of God. The course of her enchantments over me began on that first day, when silence as to her was imposed upon me against my will. Each time that I have wished to question you it seemed as though I were about to reveal a secret of which I ought to be the incorruptible guardian. Whenever I have tried to speak, a burning seal has been laid upon my lips, and I myself have become

the involuntary minister of these mysteries. You see me here to-night, for the hundredth time, bruised, defeated, broken, after leaving the hallucinating sphere which surrounds that young girl, so gentle, so fragile to both of you, but to me the cruellest of magicians! Yes, to me she is like a sorcerer holding in her right hand the invisible wand that moves the globe, and in her left the thunderbolt that rends asunder all things at her will. No longer can I look upon her brow; the light of it is insupportable. I skirt the borders of the abyss of madness too closely to be longer silent. I must speak. I seize this moment, when courage comes to me, to resist the power which drags me onward without inquiring whether or not I have the force to follow. Who is she? Did you know her young? What of her birth? Had she father and mother, or was she born of the conjunction of ice and sun? She burns and yet she freezes; she shows herself and then withdraws; she attracts me and repulses me; she brings me life, she gives me death; I love her and yet I hate her! I cannot live thus; let me be wholly in heaven or in hell!"

Holding his refilled pipe in one hand, and in the other the cover which he forgot to replace, Monsieur Becker listened to Wilfrid with a mysterious expression on his face, looking occasionally at his daughter, who seemed to understand the man's language as in harmony with the strange being who inspired it. Wilfrid was splendid to behold at this moment, — like Hamlet listening to the ghost of his father as it rises for him alone in the midst of the living.

“This is certainly the language of a man in love,” said the good pastor, innocently.

“In love!” cried Wilfrid, “yes, to common minds. But, dear Monsieur Becker, no words can express the frenzy which draws me to the feet of that unearthly being.”

“Then you do love her?” said Minna, in a tone of reproach.

“Mademoiselle, I feel such extraordinary agitation when I see her, and such deep sadness when I see her no more, that in any other man what I feel would be called love. But that sentiment draws those who feel it ardently together, whereas between her and me a great gulf lies, whose icy coldness penetrates my very being in her presence; though the feeling dies away when I see her no longer. I leave her in despair; I return to her with ardor, — like men of science who seek a secret from Nature only to be baffled, or like the painter who would fain put life upon his canvas and strives with all the resources of his art in the vain attempt.”

“Monsieur, all that you say is true,” replied the young girl, artlessly.

“How can you know, Minna?” asked the old pastor.

“Ah! my father, had you been with us this morning on the summit of the Falberg, had you seen him praying, you would not ask me that question. You would say, like Monsieur Wilfrid, when he saw his *Seraphita* for the first time in our temple, ‘It is the Spirit of Prayer.’”

These words were followed by a moment's silence.

"Ah, truly!" said Wilfrid, "she has nothing in common with the creatures who grovel upon this earth."

"On the Falberg!" said the old pastor, "how could you get there?"

"I do not know," replied Minna; "the way is like a dream to me, of which no more than a memory remains. Perhaps I should hardly believe that I had been there were it not for this tangible proof."

She drew the flower from her bosom and showed it to them. All three gazed at the pretty saxifrage, which was still fresh, and now shone in the light of the two lamps like a third luminary.

"This is indeed supernatural," said the old man, astounded at the sight of a flower blooming in winter.

"A mystery!" cried Wilfrid, intoxicated with its perfume.

"The flower makes me giddy," said Minna; "I fancy I still hear that voice, — the music of thought; that I still see the light of that look, which is Love."

"I implore you, my dear Monsieur Becker, tell me the history of Seraphita, — enigmatical human flower, — whose image is before us in this mysterious bloom."

"My dear friend," said the old man, emitting a puff of smoke, "to explain the birth of that being it is absolutely necessary that I disperse the clouds which envelop the most obscure of Christian doctrines. It is not easy to make myself clear when speaking of that incomprehensible revelation, — the last effulgence of

faith that has shone upon our lump of mud. Do you know Swedenborg?"

"By name only, — of him, of his books and his religion I know nothing."

"Then I must relate to you the whole chronicle of Swedenborg."

III.

SERAPHITA-SERAPHITUS.

AFTER a pause, during which the pastor seemed to be gathering his recollections, he continued in the following words:—

“Emanuel Swedenborg was born at Upsala in Sweden, in the month of January, 1688, according to various authors,—in 1689, according to his epitaph. His father was Bishop of Skara. Swedenborg lived eighty-five years; his death occurred in London, March 29, 1772. I use that term to convey the idea of a simple change of state. According to his disciples, Swedenborg was seen at Jarvis and in Paris after that date. Allow me, my dear Monsieur Wilfrid,” said Monsieur Becker, making a gesture to prevent all interruption, “I relate these facts without either affirming or denying them. Listen; afterwards you can think and say what you like. I will inform you when I judge, criticise, and discuss these doctrines, so as to keep clearly in view my own intellectual neutrality between HIM and Reason.

“The life of Swedenborg was divided into two parts,” continued the pastor. “From 1688 to 1745 Baron Emanuel Swedenborg appeared in the world as a man of vast learning, esteemed and cherished for his virtues, always irreproachable and constantly useful. While fulfilling

high public functions in Sweden, he published, between 1709 and 1740, several important works on mineralogy, physics, mathematics, and astronomy, which enlightened the world of learning. He originated a method of building docks suitable for the reception of large vessels, and he wrote many treatises on various important questions, such as the rise of tides, the theory of the magnet and its qualities, the motion and position of the earth and planets, and, while Assessor in the Royal College of Mines, on the proper system of working salt mines. He discovered means to construct canal-locks or sluices; and he also discovered and applied the simplest methods of extracting ore and of working metals. In fact he studied no science without advancing it. In youth he learned Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, also the oriental languages, with which he became so familiar that many distinguished scholars consulted him, and he was able to decipher the vestiges of the oldest known books of Scripture, namely: 'The Wars of Jehovah' and 'The Enunciations,' spoken of by Moses (Numbers xxi. 14, 15, 27-30), also by Joshua, Jeremiah, and Samuel, — 'The Wars of Jehovah' being the historical part and 'The Enunciations' the prophetic part of the Mosaic Books anterior to Genesis. Swedenborg even affirms that 'the Book of Jasher,' the Book of the Righteous, mentioned by Joshua, was in existence in Eastern Tartary, together with the doctrine of Correspondences. A Frenchman has lately, so they tell me, justified these statements of Swedenborg, by the discovery at Bagdad of several portions of the Bible

hitherto unknown in Europe. During the widespread discussion on animal magnetism which took its rise in Paris, and in which most men of Western science took an active part about the year 1785, Monsieur le Marquis de Thomé vindicated the memory of Swedenborg by calling attention to certain assertions made by the Commission appointed by the King of France to investigate the subject. These gentlemen declared that no theory of magnetism existed, whereas Swedenborg had studied and promulged it ever since the year 1720. Monsieur de Thomé seized this opportunity to show the reason why so many men of science relegated Swedenborg to oblivion while they delved into his treasure-house and took his facts to aid their work. 'Some of the most illustrious of these men,' said Monsieur de Thomé, alluding to the 'Theory of the Earth' by Buffon, 'have had the meanness to wear the plumage of the noble bird and refuse him all acknowledgment;' and he proved, by masterly quotations drawn from the encyclopædic works of Swedenborg, that the great prophet had anticipated by over a century the slow march of human science. It suffices to read his philosophical and mineralogical works to be convinced of this. In one passage he is seen as the precursor of modern chemistry by the announcement that the productions of organized nature are decomposable and resolve into two simple principles; also that water, air, and fire are *not elements*. In another, he goes in a few words to the heart of magnetic mysteries and deprives Mesmer of the honors of a first knowledge of them.

“There,” said Monsieur Becker, pointing to a long shelf against the wall between the stove and the window on which were ranged books of all sizes, “behold him! here are seventeen works from his pen, of which one, his ‘Philosophical and Mineralogical Works,’ published in 1734, is in three folio volumes. These productions, which prove the incontestable knowledge of Swedenborg, were given to me by Monsieur Seraphitus, his cousin and the father of Seraphita.

“In 1740,” continued Monsieur Becker, after a slight pause, “Swedenborg fell into a state of absolute silence, from which he emerged to bid farewell to all his earthly occupations; after which his thoughts turned exclusively to the Spiritual Life. He received the first commands of heaven in 1745, and he thus relates the nature of the vocation to which he was called: One evening, in London, after dining with a great appetite, a thick white mist seemed to fill his room. When the vapor dispersed a creature in human form rose from one corner of the apartment, and said in a stern tone, ‘Do not eat so much.’ He refrained. The next night the same man returned, radiant in light, and said to him, ‘I am sent of God, who has chosen you to explain to men the meaning of his Word and his Creation. I will tell you what to write.’ The vision lasted but a few moments. The ANGEL was clothed in purple. During that night the eyes of his *inner man* were opened, and he was forced to look into the heavens, into the world of spirits, and into hell, — three separate spheres; where he encountered persons of his acquaintance who had

departed from their human form, some long since, others lately. Thenceforth Swedenborg lived wholly in the spiritual life, remaining in this world only as the messenger of God. His mission was ridiculed by the incredulous, but his conduct was plainly that of a being superior to humanity. In the first place, though limited in means to the bare necessities of life, he gave away enormous sums, and publicly, in several cities, restored the fortunes of great commercial houses when they were on the brink of failure. No one ever appealed to his generosity who was not immediately satisfied. A sceptical Englishman, determined to know the truth, followed him to Paris, and relates that there his doors stood always open. One day a servant complained of this apparent negligence, which laid him open to suspicion of thefts that might be committed by others. 'He need feel no anxiety,' said Swedenborg, smiling. 'But I do not wonder at his fear; he cannot see the guardian who protects my door.' In fact, no matter in what country he made his abode he never closed his doors, and nothing was ever stolen from him. At Gottenburg — a town situated some sixty miles from Stockholm — he announced, eight days before the news arrived by courier, the conflagration which ravaged Stockholm, and the exact time at which it took place. The Queen of Sweden wrote to her brother, the King, at Berlin, that one of her ladies-in-waiting, who was ordered by the courts to pay a sum of money which she was certain her husband had paid before his death, went to Swedenborg and begged him to ask her hus-

band where she could find proof of the payment. The following day Swedenborg, having done as the lady requested, pointed out the place where the receipt would be found. He also begged the deceased to appear to his wife, and the latter saw her husband in a dream, wrapped in a dressing-gown which he wore just before his death; and he showed her the paper in the place indicated by Swedenborg, where it had been securely put away. At another time, embarking from London in a vessel commanded by Captain Dixon, he overheard a lady asking if there were plenty of provisions on board. 'We do not want a great quantity,' he said; 'in eight days and two hours we shall reach Stockholm,' — which actually happened. This peculiar state of vision as to the things of earth — into which Swedenborg could put himself at will, and which astonished those about him — was, nevertheless, but a feeble representative of his faculty of looking into heaven.

“ Not the least remarkable of his published visions is that in which he relates his journeys through the Astral Regions; his descriptions cannot fail to astonish the reader, partly through the crudity of their details. A man whose scientific eminence is incontestable, and who united in his own person powers of conception, will, and imagination, would surely have invented better if he had invented at all. The fantastic literature of the East offers nothing that can give an idea of this astounding work, full of the essence of poetry, if it is permissible to compare a work of faith with one of oriental fancy. The transportation of Swedenborg by

the Angel who served as guide to his first journey is told with a sublimity which exceeds, by the distance which God has placed betwixt the earth and sun, the great epics of Klopstock, Milton, Tasso, and Dante. This description, which serves in fact as an introduction to his work on the Astral Regions, has never been published ; it is among the oral traditions left by Swedenborg to the three disciples who were nearest to his heart. Monsieur Silverichm has written them down. Monsieur Seraphitus endeavored more than once to talk to me about them ; but the recollection of his cousin's words was so burning a memory that he always stopped short at the first sentence and became lost in a reverie from which I could not rouse him."

The old pastor sighed as he continued : " The baron told me that the argument by which the Angel proved to Swedenborg that these bodies are not made to wander through space puts all human science out of sight beneath the grandeur of a divine logic. According to the Seer, the inhabitants of Jupiter will not cultivate the sciences, which they call darkness ; those of Mercury abhor the expression of ideas by speech, which seems to them too material, — their language is ocular ; those of Saturn are continually tempted by evil spirits ; those of the Moon are as small as six-year-old children, their voices issue from the abdomen, on which they crawl ; those of Venus are gigantic in height, but stupid, and live by robbery, — although a part of this latter planet is inhabited by beings of great sweetness, who live in the love of Good.

In short, he describes the customs and morals of all the peoples attached to the different globes, and explains the general meaning of their existence as related to the universe in terms so precise, giving explanations which agree so well with their visible evolutions in the system of the world, that some day, perhaps, scientific men will come to drink of these living waters.

“Here,” said Monsieur Becker, taking down a book and opening it at a mark, “here are the words with which he ended this work:—

“‘If any man doubts that I was transported through a vast number of Astral Regions, let him recall my observation of the distances in that other life, namely, that they exist only in relation to the external state of man; now, being transformed within like unto the Angelic Spirits of those Astral Spheres, I was able to understand them.’

“The circumstances to which we of this canton owe the presence among us of Baron Seraphitus, the beloved cousin of Swedenborg, enabled me to know all the events of the extraordinary life of that prophet. He has lately been accused of imposture in certain quarters of Europe, and the public prints reported the following fact based on a letter written by the Chevalier Baylon. Swedenborg, they said, informed by certain senators of a secret correspondence of the late Queen of Sweden with her brother, the Prince of Prussia, revealed his knowledge of the secrets contained in that correspondence to the Queen, making her believe he had obtained this knowledge by super-

natural means. A man worthy of all confidence, Monsieur Charles-Léonhard de Stahlhammer, captain in the Royal guard and knight of the Sword, answered the calumny with a convincing letter."

The pastor opened a drawer of his table and looked through a number of papers until he found a gazette which he held out to Wilfrid, asking him to read aloud the following letter : —

STOCKHOLM, May 18, 1788.

I HAVE read with amazement a letter which purports to relate the interview of the famous Swedenborg with Queen Louisa-Ulrika. The circumstances therein stated are wholly false; and I hope the writer will excuse me for showing him by the following faithful narration, which can be proved by the testimony of many distinguished persons then present and still living, how completely he has been deceived.

In 1758, shortly after the death of the Prince of Prussia Swedenborg came to court, where he was in the habit of attending regularly. He had scarcely entered the queen's presence before she said to him : " Well, Mr. Assessor, have you seen my brother ? " Swedenborg answered no, and the queen rejoined : " If you do see him, greet him for me." In saying this she meant no more than a pleasant jest, and had no thought whatever of asking him for information about her brother. Eight days later (not twenty-four as stated, nor was the audience a private one), Swedenborg again came to court, but so early that the queen had not left her apartment called the White Room, where she was conversing with her maids-of-honor and other ladies attached to the court. Swedenborg did not wait until she came forth, but entered the said room and whispered something in her ear. The queen, overcome with amazement, was taken ill,

and it was some time before she recovered herself. When she did so she said to those about her: "Only God and my brother knew the thing that he has just spoken of." She admitted that it related to her last correspondence with the prince on a subject which was known to them alone. I cannot explain how Swedenborg came to know the contents of that letter, but I can affirm on my honor, that neither Count H—— (as the writer of the article states) nor any other person intercepted, or read, the queen's letters. The senate allowed her to write to her brother in perfect security, considering the correspondence as of no interest to the State. It is evident that the author of the said article is ignorant of the character of Count H——. This honored gentleman, who has done many important services to his country, unites the qualities of a noble heart to gifts of mind, and his great age has not yet weakened these precious possessions. During his whole administration he added the weight of scrupulous integrity to his enlightened policy and openly declared himself the enemy of all secret intrigues and underhand dealings, which he regarded as unworthy means to attain an end. Neither did the writer of that article understand the Assessor Swedenborg. The only weakness of that essentially honest man was a belief in the apparition of spirits; but I knew him for many years, and I can affirm that he was as fully convinced that he met and talked with spirits as I am that I am writing at this moment. As a citizen and as a friend his integrity was absolute; he abhorred deception and led the most exemplary of lives. The version which the Chevalier Baylon gave of these facts is, therefore, entirely without justification; the visit stated to have been made to Swedenborg in the night-time by Count H—— and Count T—— is hereby contradicted. In conclusion, the writer of the letter may rest assured that I am not a fol-

lower of Swedenborg. The love of truth alone impels me to give this faithful account of a fact which has been so often stated with details that are entirely false. I certify to the truth of what I have written by adding my signature.

CHARLES-LÉONHARD DE STAHLHAMMER.

“The proofs which Swedenborg gave of his mission to the royal families of Sweden and Prussia were no doubt the foundation of the belief in his doctrines which is prevalent at the two courts,” said Monsieur Becker, putting the gazette into the drawer. “However,” he continued, “I shall not tell you all the facts of his visible and material life; indeed his habits prevented them from being fully known. He lived a hidden life; not seeking either riches or fame. He was even noted for a sort of repugnance to making proselytes; he opened his mind to few persons, and never showed his external powers of second-sight to any who were not eminent in faith, wisdom, and love. He could recognize at a glance the state of the soul of every person who approached him, and those whom he desired to reach with his inward language he converted into Seers. After the year 1745, his disciples never saw him do a single thing from any human motive. One man alone, a Swedish priest, named Mathesius, set afloat a story that he went mad in London in 1744. But a eulogium on Swedenborg prepared with minute care as to all the known events of his life, was pronounced after his death in 1772 on behalf of the Royal Academy of Sciences in the Hall of the Nobles at Stockholm, by Monsieur Sandels, counsellor of the Board of Mines. A declara-

tion made before the Lord Mayor of London gives the details of his last illness and death, in which he received the ministrations of Monsieur Ferelius a Swedish priest of the highest standing, and pastor of the Swedish Church in London, Mathesius being his assistant. All persons present attested that so far from denying the value of his writings Swedenborg firmly asserted their truth. 'In one hundred years,' Monsieur Ferelius quotes him as saying, 'my doctrine will guide the *Church*.' He predicted the day and hour of his death. On that day, Sunday, March 29, 1772, hearing the clock strike, he asked what time it was. 'Five o'clock' was the answer. 'It is well,' he answered; 'thank you, God bless you.' Ten minutes later he tranquilly departed, breathing a gentle sigh. Simplicity, moderation, and solitude were the features of his life. When he had finished writing any of his books he sailed either for London or for Holland, where he published them, and never spoke of them again. He published in this way twenty-seven different treatises, all written, he said, from the dictation of Angels. Be it true or false, few men have been strong enough to endure the flames of oral illumination.

"There they all are," said Monsieur Becker, pointing to a second shelf on which were some sixty volumes. "The treatises on which the Divine Spirit casts its most vivid gleams are seven in number, namely: 'Heaven and Hell;' 'Angelic Wisdom concerning the Divine Love and the Divine Wisdom;' 'Angelic Wisdom concerning the Divine Providence;' 'The Apocalypse Revealed;' 'Con-

jugial Love and its Chaste Delights ; ’ ‘ The True Christian Religion ; ’ and ‘ An Exposition of the Internal Sense.’ Swedenborg’s explanation of the Apocalypse begins with these words,” said Monsieur Becker, taking down and opening the volume nearest to him : “ ‘ Herein I have written nothing of mine own ; I speak as I am bidden by the Lord, who said, through the same angel, to John : “ Thou shalt not seal the sayings of this Prophecy.” ’ ” (Revelation xxii. 10.)

“ My dear Monsieur Wilfrid,” said the old man, looking at his guest, “ I often tremble in every limb as I read, during the long winter evenings the awe-inspiring works in which this man declares with perfect artlessness the wonders that are revealed to him. ‘ I have seen,’ he says, ‘ Heaven and the Angels. The spiritual man sees his spiritual fellows far better than the terrestrial man sees the men of earth. In describing the wonders of heaven and beneath the heavens I obey the Lord’s command. Others have the right to believe me or not as they choose. I cannot put them into the state in which God has put me ; it is not in my power to enable them to converse with Angels, nor to work miracles within their understanding ; they alone can be the instrument of their rise to angelic intercourse. It is now twenty-eight years since I have lived in the Spiritual world with angels, and on earth with men ; for it pleased God to open the eyes of my Spirit as he did that of Paul, and of Daniel and Elisha.’

“ And yet,” continued the pastor, thoughtfully, “ certain persons have had visions of the spiritual world

through the complete detachment which somnambulism produces between their external form and their inner being. 'In this state,' says Swedenborg in his treatise on Angelic Wisdom (No. 257) 'Man may rise into the region of celestial light because, his corporeal senses being abolished, the influence of heaven acts without hindrance on his inner man.' Many persons who do not doubt that Swedenborg received celestial revelations think that his writings are not all the result of divine inspiration. Others insist on absolute adherence to him; while admitting his many obscurities, they believe that the imperfection of earthly language prevented the prophet from clearly revealing those spiritual visions whose clouds disperse to the eyes of those whom faith regenerates; for, to use the words of his greatest disciple, 'Flesh is but an external propagation.' To poets and to writers his presentation of the marvellous is amazing; to Seers it is simply reality. To some Christians his descriptions have seemed scandalous. Certain critics have ridiculed the celestial substance of his temples, his golden palaces, his splendid cities where angels disport themselves; they laugh at his groves of miraculous trees, his gardens where the flowers speak and the air is white, and the mystical stones, the sard, carbuncle, chrysolite, chrysoprase, jacinth, chalcedony, beryl, the Urim and Thummim, are endowed with motion, express celestial truths, and reply by variations of light to questions put to them ('True Christian Religion,' 219). Many noble souls will not admit his spiritual worlds where colors are heard in delightful concert,

where language flames and flashes, where the Word is writ in pointed spiral letters ('True Christian Religion,' 278). Even in the North some writers have laughed at the gates of pearl, and the diamonds which stud the floors and walls of his New Jerusalem, where the most ordinary utensils are made of the rarest substances of the globe. 'But,' say his disciples, 'because such things are sparsely scattered on this earth does it follow that they are not abundant in other worlds? On earth they are terrestrial substances, whereas in heaven they assume celestial forms and are in keeping with angels.' In this connection Swedenborg has used the very words of Jesus Christ, who said, 'If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?'

"Monsieur," continued the pastor, with an emphatic gesture, "I have read the whole of Swedenborg's works; and I say it with pride, because I have done it and yet have retained my reason. In reading him men either miss his meaning or become Seers like him. Though I have evaded both extremes, I have often experienced unheard-of delights, deep emotions, inward joys, which alone can reveal to us the plenitude of truth,—the evidence of celestial Light. All things here below seem small indeed when the soul is lost in the perusal of these Treatises. It is impossible not to be amazed when we think that in the short space of thirty years this man wrote and published, on the truths of the Spiritual World, twenty-five quarto volumes, composed in Latin, of which the shortest has

five hundred pages, all of them printed in small type. He left, they say, twenty others in London, bequeathed to his nephew, Monsieur Silverichm, formerly almoner to the King of Sweden. Certainly a man who, between the ages of twenty and sixty, had already exhausted himself in publishing a series of encyclopædical works, must have received supernatural assistance in composing these later stupendous treatises, at an age, too, when human vigor is on the wane. You will find in these writings thousands of propositions, all numbered, none of which have been refuted. Throughout we see method and precision; the presence of the Spirit issuing and flowing down from a single fact, — the existence of angels. His ‘True Christian Religion,’ which sums up his whole doctrine and is vigorous with light, was conceived and written at the age of eighty-three. In fact, his amazing vigor and omniscience are not denied by any of his critics, not even by his enemies.

“Nevertheless,” said Monsieur Becker, slowly, “though I have drunk deep in this torrent of divine light, God has not opened the eyes of my inner being, and I judge these writings by the reason of an unregenerated man. I have often felt that the *inspired* Swedenborg must have misunderstood the Angels. I have laughed over certain visions which, according to his disciples, I ought to have believed with veneration. I have failed to imagine the spiral writing of the Angels or their golden belts, on which the gold is of great or lesser thickness. If, for example, this statement, ‘Some angels are solitary,’ affected me power

fully for a time, I was, on reflection, unable to reconcile this solitude with their marriages. I have not understood why the Virgin Mary should continue to wear blue satin garments in heaven. I have even dared to ask myself why those gigantic demons, Enakim and Hephilim, came so frequently to fight the cherubim on the apocalyptic plains of Armageddon; and I cannot explain to my own mind how Satans can argue with Angels. Monsieur le Baron Seraphitus assured me that these details concerned only the angels who live on earth in human form. The visions of the prophet are often blurred with grotesque figures. One of his spiritual tales, or 'Memorable relations,' as he called them, begins thus: 'I see the spirits assembling, they have hats upon their heads.' In another of these Memorabilia he receives from heaven a bit of paper, on which he saw, he says, the hieroglyphics of the primitive peoples, which were composed of curved lines traced from the finger-rings that are worn in heaven. However, perhaps I am wrong; possibly the material absurdities with which his works are strewn have spiritual significations. Otherwise, how shall we account for the growing influence of his religion? His church numbers to-day more than seven hundred thousand believers,—as many in the United States of America as in England, where there are seven thousand Swedenborgians in the city of Manchester alone. Many men of high rank in knowledge and in social position in Germany, in Prussia, and in the Northern kingdoms have publicly adopted the beliefs of Sweden-

borg ; which, I may remark, are more comforting than those of all other Christian communions. I wish I had the power to explain to you clearly in succinct language the leading points of the doctrine on which Swedenborg founded his church ; but I fear such a summary, made from recollection, would be necessarily defective. I shall, therefore, allow myself to speak only of those ‘ Arcana ’ which concern the birth of Seraphita.”

Here Monsieur Becker paused, as though composing his mind to gather up his ideas. Presently he continued, as follows : —

“ After establishing mathematically that man lives eternally in spheres of either a lower or a higher grade, Swedenborg applies the term ‘ Spiritual Angels ’ to beings who in this world are prepared for heaven, where they become angels. According to him, God has not created angels ; none exist who have not been men upon the earth. The earth is the nursery-ground of heaven. The Angels are therefore not Angels as such (‘ Angelic Wisdom,’ 57), they are transformed through their close conjunction with God ; which conjunction God never refuses, because the essence of God is not negative, but incessantly active. The spiritual angels pass through three natures of love, because man is only regenerated through successive stages (‘ True Religion ’). First, the LOVE OF SELF : the supreme expression of this love is human genius, whose works are worshipped. Next, LOVE OF LIFE : this love produces prophets, — great men whom the world accepts as guides and proclaims to be divine. Lastly, LOVE

OF HEAVEN, and this creates the Spiritual Angel. These angels are, so to speak, the flowers of humanity, which culminates in them and works for that culmination. They must possess either the love of heaven or the wisdom of heaven, but always Love before Wisdom.

“ Thus the first transformation of the natural man is into Love. To reach this first degree, his previous existences must have passed through Hope and Charity, which prepare him for Faith and Prayer. The ideas acquired by the exercise of these virtues are transmitted to each of the human envelopes within which are hidden the metamorphoses of the INNER BEING; for nothing is separate, each existence is necessary to the other existences. Hope cannot advance without Charity, nor Faith without Prayer; they are the four fronts of a solid square. ‘One virtue missing,’ he said, ‘and the Spiritual Angel is like a broken pearl.’ Each of these existences is therefore a circle in which revolves the celestial riches of the inner being. The perfection of the Spiritual Angels comes from this mysterious progression in which nothing is lost of the high qualities that are successively acquired to attain each glorious incarnation; for at each transformation they cast away unconsciously the flesh and its errors. When the man lives in Love he has shed all evil passions: Hope, Charity, Faith, and Prayer have, in the words of Isaiah, purged the dross of his inner being, which can never more be polluted by earthly affections. Hence the grand saying of Christ quoted

by Saint Matthew, ‘Lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt,’ and those still grander words: ‘If ye were of this world the world would love you, but I have chosen you out of the world; be ye therefore perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.’”

“The second transformation of man is to Wisdom. Wisdom is the understanding of celestial things to which the spirit is brought by Love. The Spirit of Love has acquired strength, the result of all vanquished terrestrial passions; it loves God blindly. But the Spirit of Wisdom has risen to understanding and knows why it loves. The wings of the one are spread and bear the spirit to God; the wings of the other are held down by the awe that comes of understanding: the spirit knows God. The one longs incessantly to see God and to fly to Him; the other attains to Him and trembles. The union effected between the Spirit of Love and the Spirit of Wisdom carries the human being into a Divine state during which time his soul is WOMAN and his body MAN, the last human manifestation in which the Spirit conquers Form, or Form still struggles against the Spirit,—for Form, that is, the flesh, is ignorant, rebels, and desires to continue gross. This supreme trial creates untold sufferings seen by Heaven alone,—the agony of Christ in the Garden of Olives.

“After death the first heaven opens to this dual and purified human nature. Therefore it is that man dies in despair while the Spirit dies in ecstasy. Thus, the

NATURAL, the state of beings not yet regenerated ; the SPIRITUAL, the state of those who have become Angelic Spirits ; and the DIVINE, the state in which the Angel exists before he breaks from his covering of flesh, are the three degrees of existence through which man enters heaven. One of Swedenborg's thoughts expressed in his own words will explain to you with wonderful clearness the difference between the NATURAL and the SPIRITUAL. 'To the minds of men,' he says, 'the Natural passes into the Spiritual ; they regard the world under its visible aspects, they perceive it only as it can be realized by their senses. But to the apprehension of Angelic Spirits, the Spiritual passes into the Natural ; they regard the world in its inward essence, and not in its form.' Thus human sciences are but analyses of form. The man of science as the world goes is purely external like his knowledge ; his inner being is only used to preserve his aptitude for the perception of external truths. The Angelic Spirit goes far beyond that ; his knowledge is the thought of which human science is but the utterance ; he derives that knowledge from the Logos, and learns the law of CORRESPONDENCES by which the world is placed in unison with heaven. The WORD OF GOD was wholly written by pure Correspondences, and covers an esoteric or spiritual meaning, which according to the science of Correspondences, cannot be understood. 'There exist,' says Swedenborg ('Celestial Doctrine' 26), 'innumerable Arcana within the hidden meaning of the Correspondences. Thus the men who scoff at the books of the Prophets

where the Word is enshrined are as densely ignorant as those other men who know nothing of a science and yet ridicule its truths. To know the Correspondences of the Word with Heaven ; to know the Correspondences which exist between the things visible and ponderable in the terrestrial world and the things invisible and imponderable in the spiritual world, is to hold heaven within our comprehension. All the objects of the manifold creations having emanated from God necessarily enfold a hidden meaning ; according, indeed, to the grand thought of Isaiah, 'The earth is a garment.'

" This mysterious link between Heaven and the smallest atoms of created matter constitutes what Swedenborg calls a Celestial Arcanum, and his treatise on the 'Celestial Arcana' in which he explains the correspondences or significances of the Natural with, and to, the Spiritual, giving, to use the words of Jacob Boehm, the sign and seal of all things, occupies not less than sixteen volumes containing thirty thousand propositions. 'This marvellous knowledge of Correspondences which the goodness of God granted to Swedenborg,' says one of his disciples, 'is the secret of the interest which draws men to his works. According to him, all things are derived from heaven, all things lead back to heaven. His writings are sublime and clear ; he speaks in heaven, and earth hears him. Take one of his sentences by itself and a volume could be made of it ;' and the disciple quotes the following passages taken from a thousand others that would answer the same purpose.

“ ‘The kingdom of heaven,’ says Swedenborg (‘*Celestial Arcana*’), ‘is the kingdom of motives. ACTION is born in heaven, thence into the world, and, by degrees, to the infinitely remote parts of earth. Terrestrial effects being thus linked to celestial causes, all things are CORRESPONDENT and SIGNIFICANT. Man is the means of union between the Natural and the Spiritual.’

“ The Angelic Spirits therefore know the very nature of the Correspondences which link to heaven all earthly things; they know, too, the inner meaning of the prophetic words which foretell their evolutions. Thus to these Spirits everything here below has its significance; the tiniest flower is a thought, — a life which corresponds to certain lineaments of the Great Whole, of which they have a constant intuition. To them Adultery and the excesses spoken of in Scripture and by the Prophets, often garbled by self-styled scholars, mean the state of those souls which in this world persist in tainting themselves with earthly affections, thus compelling their divorce from Heaven. Clouds signify the veil of the Most High. Torches, shew-bread, horses and horsemen, harlots, precious stones, in short, everything named in Scripture, has to them a clear-cut meaning, and reveals the future of terrestrial facts in their relation to Heaven. They penetrate the truths contained in the Revelation of Saint John the divine, which human science has subsequently demonstrated and proved materially; such, for instance, as the following (‘big,’ said Swedenborg, ‘with many human sciences’): ‘I saw a new heaven and a new

earth, for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away' (Revelation xxi. 1). These Spirits know the supper at which the flesh of kings and the flesh of all men, free and bond, is eaten, to which an Angel standing in the sun has bidden them. They see the wingèd woman, clothed with the sun, and the mailed man. 'The horse of the Apocalypse,' says Swedenborg 'is the visible image of human intellect ridden by Death, for it bears within itself the elements of its own destruction.' Moreover, they can distinguish beings concealed under forms which to ignorant eyes would seem fantastic. When a man is disposed to receive the prophetic afflation of Correspondences, it rouses within him a perception of the Word; he comprehends that the creations are transformations only; his intellect is sharpened, a burning thirst takes possession of him which only Heaven can quench. He conceives, according to the greater or lesser perfection of his inner being, the power of the Angelic Spirits; and he advances, led by Desire (the least imperfect state of unregenerated man) towards Hope, the gateway to the world of Spirits, whence he reaches Prayer, which gives him the Key of Heaven.

“What being here below would not desire to render himself worthy of entrance into the sphere of those who live in secret by Love and Wisdom? Here on earth, during their lifetime, such spirits remain pure; they neither see, nor think, nor speak like other men. There are two ways by which perception comes, — one internal, the other external. Man is wholly external, the

Angelic Spirit wholly internal. The Spirit goes to the depth of Numbers, possesses a full sense of them, knows their significances. It controls Motion, and by reason of its ubiquity it shares in all things. 'An Angel,' says Swedenborg, 'is ever present to a man when desired' ('Angelic Wisdom'); for the Angel has the gift of detaching himself from his body, and he sees into heaven as the prophets and as Swedenborg himself saw into it. 'In this state,' writes Swedenborg ('True Religion,' 136), 'the spirit of a man may move from one place to another, his body remaining where it is, — a condition in which I lived for over twenty-six years.' It is thus that we should interpret all Biblical statements which begin, 'The Spirit led me.' Angelic Wisdom is to human wisdom what the innumerable forces of nature are to its action, which is one. All things live again, and move and have their being in the Spirit, which is in God. Saint Paul expresses this truth when he says, *In Deo sumus, movemur, et vivimus*, — we live, we act, we are in God.

"Earth offers no hindrance to the Angelic Spirit, just as the Word offers him no obscurity. His approaching divinity enables him to see the thought of God veiled in the Logos, just as, living by his inner being, the Spirit is in communication with the hidden meaning of all things on this earth. Science is the language of the Temporal world, Love is that of the Spiritual world. Thus man takes note of more than he is able to explain, while the Angelic Spirit sees and comprehends. Science depresses man; Love exalts the

Angel. Science is still seeking, Love has found. Man judges Nature according to his own relations to her; the Angelic Spirit judges it in its relation to Heaven. In short, all things have a voice for the Spirit. Spirits are in the secret of the harmony of all creations with each other; they comprehend the spirit of sound, the spirit of color, the spirit of vegetable life; they can question the mineral, and the mineral makes answer to their thoughts. What to them are sciences and the treasures of the earth when they grasp all things by the eye at all moments, when the worlds which absorb the minds of so many men are to them but the last step from which they spring to God? Love of heaven, or the Wisdom of heaven, is made manifest in them by a circle of light which surrounds them, and is visible to the Elect. Their innocence, of which that of children is a symbol, possesses, nevertheless, a knowledge which children have not; they are both innocent and learned. ‘And,’ says Swedenborg, ‘the innocence of Heaven makes such an impression upon the soul that those whom it affects keep a rapturous memory of it which lasts them all their lives, as I myself have experienced. It is perhaps sufficient,’ he goes on, ‘to have only a minimum perception of it to be forever changed, to long to enter Heaven and the sphere of Hope.’

“His doctrine of Marriage can be reduced to the following words: ‘The Lord has taken the beauty and the grace of the life of man and bestowed them upon woman. When man is not reunited to this beauty and

this grace of his life, he is harsh, sad, and sullen ; when he is reunited to them he is joyful and complete.' The Angels are ever at the perfect point of beauty. Marriages are celebrated by wondrous ceremonies. In these unions, which produce no children, man contributes the *Understanding*, woman the *Will* ; they become one being, one Flesh here below, and pass to heaven clothed in the celestial form. On this earth, the natural attraction of the sexes towards enjoyment is an Effect which allures, fatigues and disgusts ; but in the form celestial the pair, now *one* in Spirit find within theirselves a ceaseless source of joy. Swedenborg was led to see these nuptials of the Spirits, which in the words of Saint Luke (xx. 35) are neither marrying nor giving in marriage, and which inspire none but spiritual pleasures. An Angel offered to make him witness of such a marriage and bore him thither on his wings (the wings are a symbol and not a reality). The Angel clothed him in a wedding garment and when Swedenborg, finding himself thus robed in light, asked why, the answer was. ' For these events, our garments are illuminated ; they shine ; they are made nuptial.' ('Conjugal Love,' 19, 20, 21.) Then he saw two Angels, one coming from the South, the other from the East ; the Angel of the South was in a chariot drawn by two white horses, with reins of the color and brilliance of the dawn ; but lo, when they were near him in the sky, chariot and horses vanished. The Angel of the East, clothed in crimson, and the Angel of the South, in purple, drew together, like breaths, and mingled : one was the Angel of Love,

the other the Angel of Wisdom. Swedenborg's guide told him that the two Angels had been linked together on earth by an inward friendship and ever united though separated in life by great distances. Consent, the essence of all good marriage upon earth, is the habitual state of Angels in Heaven. Love is the light of their world. The eternal rapture of Angels comes from the faculty that God communicates to them to render back to Him the joy they feel through Him. This reciprocity of infinitude forms their life. They become infinite by participating of the essence of God, who generates Himself by Himself.

“The immensity of the Heavens where the Angels dwell is such that if man were endowed with sight as rapid as the darting of light from the sun to the earth, and if he gazed throughout eternity, his eyes could not reach the horizon, nor find an end. Light alone can give an idea of the joys of heaven. ‘It is,’ says Swedenborg (*‘Angelic Wisdom,’* 7, 25, 26, 27), ‘a vapor of the virtue of God, a pure emanation of His splendor, beside which our greatest brilliance is obscurity. It can compass all; it can renew all, and is never absorbed: it environs the Angel and unites him to God by infinite joys which multiply infinitely of themselves. This Light destroys whosoever is not prepared to receive it. No one here below, nor yet in Heaven can see God and live. This is the meaning of the saying (*Exodus xix. 12, 13, 21–23*) ‘Take heed to yourselves that ye go not up into the mount—lest ye break through unto the Lord to gaze, and many perish.’”

And again (Exodus xxxiv. 29-35), "When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two Tables of testimony in his hand, his face shone, so that he put a veil upon it when he spake with the people, lest any of them die." The Transfiguration of Jesus Christ likewise revealed the light surrounding the Messengers from on high and the ineffable joys of the Angels who are forever imbued with it. "His face," says Saint Matthew (xvii. 1-5), "did shine as the sun and his raiment was white as the light — and a bright cloud overshadowed them."

"When a planet contains only those beings who reject the Lord, when his word is ignored, then the Angelic Spirits are gathered together by the four winds, and God sends forth an Exterminating Angel to change the face of the refractory earth, which in the immensity of this universe is to Him what an unfruitful seed is to Nature. Approaching the globe, this Exterminating Angel, borne by a comet, causes the planet to turn upon its axis, and the lands lately covered by the seas reappear, adorned in freshness and obedient to the laws proclaimed in Genesis; the Word of God is once more powerful on this new earth, which everywhere exhibits the effects of terrestrial waters and celestial flames. The light brought by the Angel from On High, causes the sun to pale. 'Then,' says Isaiah, (xix. 20) 'men will hide in the clefts of the rock and roll themselves in the dust of the earth.' 'They will cry to the mountains (Revelation), Fall on us! and to the seas, Swallow us up! Hide us from the face of Him

that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!’ The Lamb is the great figure and hope of the Angels misjudged and persecuted here below. Christ himself has said, ‘Blessed are those who mourn! Blessed are the simple-hearted! Blessed are they that love!’ — All Swedenborg is there! Suffer, Believe, Love. To love truly must we not suffer? must we not believe? Love begets Strength, Strength bestows Wisdom, thence Intelligence; for Strength and Wisdom demand Will. To be intelligent, is not that to Know, to Wish, and to Will,—the three attributes of the Angelic Spirit? ‘If the universe has a meaning,’ Monsieur Saint-Martin said to me when I met him during a journey which he made in Sweden, ‘surely this is the one most worthy of God.’

“But, Monsieur,” continued the pastor after a thoughtful pause, “of what avail to you are these shreds of thoughts taken here and there from the vast extent of a work of which no true idea can be given except by comparing it to a river of light, to billows of flame? When a man plunges into it he is carried away as by an awful current. Dante’s poem seems but a speck to the reader submerged in the almost Biblical verses with which Swedenborg renders palpable the Celestial Worlds, as Beethoven built his palaces of harmony with thousands of notes, as architects have reared cathedrals with millions of stones. We roll in soundless depths, where our minds will not always sustain us. Ah, surely a great and powerful intellect is needed to bring us back, safe and sound, to our own social beliefs.

“Swedenborg,” resumed the pastor, “was particularly attached to the Baron de Seraphitz, whose name, according to an old Swedish custom, had taken from time immemorial the Latin termination of *us*. The baron was an ardent disciple of the Swedish prophet, who had opened the eyes of his Inner-Man and brought him to a life in conformity with the decrees from On-High. He sought for an Angelic Spirit among women; Swedenborg found her for him in a vision. His bride was the daughter of a London shoemaker, in whom, said Swedenborg, the life of Heaven shone, she having passed through all anterior trials. After the death, that is, the transformation of the prophet, the baron came to Jarvis to accomplish his celestial nuptials with the observances of Prayer. As for me, who am not a Seer, I have only known the terrestrial works of this couple. Their lives were those of saints whose virtues are the glory of the Roman Church. They ameliorated the condition of our people; they supplied them all with means in return for work, — little, perhaps, but enough for all their wants. Those who lived with them in constant intercourse never saw them show a sign of anger or impatience; they were constantly beneficent and gentle, full of courtesy and loving-kindness; their marriage was the harmony of two souls indissolubly united. Two eiders winging the same flight, the sound in the echo, the thought in the word, — these, perhaps, are true images of their union. Every one here in Jarvis loved them with an affection which I can compare only to the love of a plant for the

sun. The wife was simple in her manners, beautiful in form, lovely in face, with a dignity of bearing like that of august personages. In 1783, being then twenty-six years old, she conceived a child; her pregnancy was to the pair a solemn joy. They prepared to bid the earth farewell; for they told me they should be transformed when their child had passed the state of infancy which needed their fostering care until the strength to exist alone should be given to her.

“ Their child was born, — the Seraphita we are now concerned with. From the moment of her conception father and mother lived a still more solitary life than in the past, lifting themselves to heaven by Prayer. They hoped to see Swedenborg, and faith realized their hope. The day on which Seraphita came into the world Swedenborg appeared in Jarvis, and filled the room of the new-born child with light. I was told that he said, ‘ The work is accomplished; the Heavens rejoice!’ Sounds of unknown melodies were heard throughout the house, seeming to come from the four points of heaven on the wings of the wind. The spirit of Swedenborg led the father forth to the shores of the fiord and there quitted him. Certain inhabitants of Jarvis, having approached Monsieur Seraphitus as he stood on the shore, heard him repeat those blissful words of Scripture: ‘ How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of Him who is sent of God!’

“ I had left the parsonage on my way to baptize the infant and name it, and perform the other duties required by law, when I met the baron returning to the

house. ‘Your ministrations are superfluous,’ he said ; ‘our child is to be without name on this earth. You must not baptize in the waters of an earthly Church one who has just been immersed in the fires of Heaven. This child will remain a blossom, it will not grow old ; you will see it pass away. You exist, but our child has life ; you have outward senses, the child has none, its being is all inward.’ These words were uttered in so strange and supernatural a voice that I was more affected by them than by the shining of his face, from which light appeared to exude. His appearance realized the phantasmal ideas which we form of inspired beings as we read the prophecies of the Bible. But such effects are not rare among our mountains, where the nitre of perpetual snows produces extraordinary phenomena in the human organization.

“I asked him the cause of his emotion. ‘Swedenborg came to us ; he has just left me ; I have breathed the air of heaven,’ he replied. ‘Under what form did he appear?’ I said. ‘Under his earthly form ; dressed as he was the last time I saw him in London, at the house of Richard Shearsmith, Coldbath-fields, in July, 1771. He wore his brown frieze coat with steel buttons, his waistcoat buttoned to the throat, a white cravat, and the same magisterial wig rolled and powdered at the sides and raised high in front, showing his vast and luminous brow, in keeping with the noble square face, where all is power and tranquillity. I recognized the large nose with its fiery nostril, the mouth that ever smiled, — angelic mouth from which

these words, the pledge of my happiness, have just issued, "We shall meet soon."

"The conviction that shone on the baron's face forbade all discussion; I listened in silence. His voice had a contagious heat which made my bosom burn within me; his fanaticism stirred my heart as the anger of another makes our nerves vibrate. I followed him in silence to his house, where I saw the nameless child lying mysteriously folded to its mother's breast. The babe heard my step and turned its head toward me; its eyes were not those of an ordinary child. To give you an idea of the impression I received, I must say that already they saw and thought. The childhood of this predestined being was attended by circumstances quite extraordinary in our climate. For nine years our winters were milder and our summers longer than usual. This phenomenon gave rise to several discussions among scientific men; but none of their explanations seemed sufficient to academicians, and the baron smiled when I told him of them. The child was never seen in its nudity as other children are; it was never touched by man or woman, but lived a sacred thing upon the mother's breast, and it never cried. If you question old David he will confirm these facts about his mistress, for whom he feels an adoration like that of Louis IX. for the saint whose name he bore.

"At nine years of age the child began to pray; prayer is her life. You saw her in the church at Christmas, the only day on which she comes there; she is separated from the other worshippers by a visible space.

If that space does not exist between herself and men she suffers. That is why she passes nearly all her time alone in the château. The events of her life are unknown ; she is seldom seen ; her days are spent in the state of mystical contemplation which was, so Catholic writers tell us, habitual with the early Christian solitaries, in whom the oral tradition of Christ's own words still remained. Her mind, her soul, her body, all within her is virgin as the snow on those mountains. At ten years of age she was just what you see her now. When she was nine her father and mother expired together, without pain or visible malady, after naming the day and hour at which they would cease to be. Standing at their feet she looked at them with a calm eye, not showing either sadness, or grief, or joy, or curiosity. When we approached to remove the two bodies she said, 'Carry them away!' 'Seraphita,' I said, for so we called her, 'are you not affected by the death of your father and your mother who loved you so much?' 'Dead?' she answered, 'no, they live in me forever — That is nothing,' she added, pointing without a trace of emotion to the bodies they were bearing away. I then saw her for the third time only since her birth. In church it is difficult to distinguish her ; she stands near a column which, seen from the pulpit, is in shadow, so that I cannot observe her features.

“Of all the servants of the household there remained after the death of the master and mistress only old David, who, in spite of his eighty-two years, suffices to wait on his mistress. Some of our Jarvis people tell

wonderful tales about her. These have a certain weight in a land so essentially conducive to mystery as ours ; and I am now studying the treatise on Incantations by Jean Wier and other works relating to demonology, where pretended supernatural events are recorded, hoping to find facts analogous to those which are attributed to her."

"Then you do not believe in her?" said Wilfred.

"Oh yes, I do," said the pastor, genially, "I think her a very capricious girl ; a little spoilt by her parents, who turned her head with the religious ideas I have just revealed to you."

Minna shook her head in a way that gently expressed contradiction.

"Poor girl!" continued the old man, "her parents bequeathed to her that fatal exaltation of soul which misleads mystics and renders them all more or less mad. She subjects herself to fasts which horrify poor David. The good old man is like a sensitive plant which quivers at the slightest breeze, and glows under the first sun-ray. His mistress, whose incomprehensible language has become his, is the breeze and the sun-ray to him ; in his eyes her feet are diamonds and her brow is strewn with stars ; she walks environed with a white and luminous atmosphere ; her voice is accompanied by music ; she has the gift of rendering herself invisible. If you ask to see her, he will tell you she has gone to the *ASTRAL REGIONS*. It is difficult to believe such a story, is it not? You know all miracles bear more or less resemblance to the story of the

Golden Tooth. We have our golden tooth in Jarvis, that is all. Duncker the fisherman asserts that he has seen her plunge into the fiord and come up in the shape of an eider-duck, at other times walking on the billows in a storm. Fergus, who leads the flocks to the sæters, says that in rainy weather a circle of clear sky can be seen over the Swedish castle; and that the heavens are always blue above Seraphita's head when she is on the mountain. Many women hear the tones of a mighty organ when Seraphita enters the church, and ask their neighbors earnestly if they too do not hear them. But my daughter, for whom during the last two years Seraphita has shown much affection, has never heard this music, and has never perceived the heavenly perfumes which, they say, make the air fragrant about her when she moves. Minna, to be sure, has often on returning from their walks together expressed to me the delight of a young girl in the beauties of our spring-time, in the spicy odors of budding larches and pines and the earliest flowers; but after our long winters what can be more natural than such pleasure? The companionship of this so-called spirit has nothing so very extraordinary in it, has it, my child?"

"The secrets of that spirit are not mine," said Minna. "Near it I know all, away from it I know nothing; near that exquisite life I am no longer myself, far from it I forget all. The time we pass together is a dream which my memory scarcely retains. I may have heard yet not remember the music which the women tell of; in that presence, I may have breathed

celestial perfumes, seen the glory of the heavens, and yet be unable to recollect them here."

"What astonishes me most," resumed the pastor, addressing Wilfrid, "is to notice that you suffer from being near her."

"Near her!" exclaimed the stranger, "she has never so much as let me touch her hand. When she saw me for the first time her glance intimidated me; she said: 'You are welcome here, for you were to come.' I fancied that she knew me. I trembled. It is fear that forces me to believe in her."

"With me it is love," said Minna, without a blush.

"Are you making fun of me?" said Monsieur Becker, laughing good-humoredly; "you my daughter, in calling yourself a Spirit of Love, and you, Monsieur Wilfrid, in pretending to be a Spirit of Wisdom?"

He drank a glass of beer and so did not see the singular look which Wilfrid cast upon Minna.

"Jesting apart," resumed the old gentleman, "I have been much astonished to hear that these two mad-caps ascended to the summit of the Falberg; it must be a girlish exaggeration; they probably went to the crest of a ledge. It is impossible to reach the peaks of the Falberg."

"If so, father," said Minna, in an agitated voice, "I must have been under the power of a spirit; for indeed we reached the summit of the Ice-Cap."

"This is really serious," said Monsieur Becker. "Minna is always truthful."

"Monsieur Becker," said Wilfrid, "I swear to you

that Seraphita exercises such extraordinary power over me that I know no language in which I can give you the least idea of it. She has revealed to me things known to myself alone."

"Somnambulism!" said the old man. "A great many such effects are related by Jean Wier as phenomena easily explained and formerly observed in Egypt."

"Lend me Swedenborg's theosophical works," said Wilfrid, "and let me plunge into those gulfs of light, — you have given me a thirst for them."

Monsieur Becker took down a volume and gave it to his guest, who instantly began to read it. It was about nine o'clock in the evening. The serving-woman brought in the supper. Minna made tea. The repast over, each returned silently to his or her occupation; the pastor read the Incantations; Wilfrid pursued the spirit of Swedenborg; and the young girl continued to sew, her mind absorbed in recollections. It was a true Norwegian evening — peaceful, studious, and domestic; full of thoughts, flowers blooming beneath the snow. Wilfrid, as he devoured the pages of the prophet, lived by his inner senses only; the pastor, looking up at times from his book, called Minna's attention to the absorption of their guest with an air that was half-serious, half-jesting. To Minna's thoughts the face of Seraphitus smiled upon her as it hovered above the clouds of smoke which enveloped them. The clock struck twelve. Suddenly the outer door was opened violently. Heavy but hurried steps, the steps of a

terrified old man, were heard in the narrow vestibule between the two doors ; then David burst into the parlor.

“ Danger ! danger ! ” he cried. “ Come ! come, all ! The evil spirits are unchained ! Fiery mitres are on their heads ! Demons, Vertumni, Sirens ! they tempt her as Jesus was tempted on the mountain ! Come, come ! and drive them away.”

“ Do you not recognize the language of Swedenborg ? ” said the pastor, laughing, to Wilfrid. “ Here it is ; pure from the source.”

But Wilfrid and Minna were gazing in terror at old David, who, with hair erect, and eyes distraught, his legs trembling and covered with snow, for he had come without snow-shoes, stood swaying from side to side, as if some boisterous wind were shaking him.

“ Is he harmed ? ” cried Minna.

“ The devils hope and try to conquer her,” replied the old man.

The words made Wilfrid’s pulses throb.

“ For the last five hours she has stood erect, her eyes raised to heaven and her arms extended ; she suffers, she cries to God. I cannot cross the barrier ; Hell has posted the Vertumni as sentinels. They have set up an iron wall between her and her old David. She wants me, but what can I do ? Oh, help me ! help me ! Come and pray ! ”

The old man’s despair was terrible to see.

“ The Light of God is defending her,” he went on, with infectious faith, “ but oh ! she might yield to violence.”

“ Silence, David ! you are raving. This is a matter

to be verified. We will go with you," said the pastor, "and you shall see that there are no Vertumni, nor Satans, nor Sirens, in that house."

"Your father is blind," whispered David to Minna.

Wilfrid, on whom the reading of Swedenborg's first treatise, which he had rapidly gone through, had produced a powerful effect, was already in the corridor putting on his skates; Minna was ready in a few moments, and both left the old men far behind as they darted forward to the Swedish castle.

"Do you hear that cracking sound?" said Wilfrid.

"The ice of the fiord stirs," answered Minna; "the spring is coming."

Wilfrid was silent. When the two reached the courtyard they were conscious that they had neither the faculty nor the strength to enter the house.

"What think you of her?" asked Wilfrid.

"See that radiance!" cried Minna, going towards the window of the salon. "He is there! How beautiful! O my Seraphitus, take me!"

The exclamation was uttered inwardly. She saw Seraphitus standing erect, lightly swathed in an opal-tinted mist that disappeared at a little distance from the body, which seemed almost phosphorescent.

"How beautiful she is!" cried Wilfrid, mentally.

Just then Monsieur Becker arrived, followed by David; he saw his daughter and guest standing before the window; going up to them, he looked into the salon and said quietly, "Well, my good David, she is only saying her prayers."

“ Ah, but try to enter, Monsieur.”

“ Why disturb those who pray ? ” answered the pastor.

At this instant the moon, rising above the Falberg, cast its rays upon the window. All three turned round, attracted by this natural effect which made them quiver ; when they turned back to again look at Seraphita she had disappeared.

“ How strange ! ” exclaimed Wilfrid.

“ I hear delightful sounds,” said Minna.

“ Well,” said the pastor, “ it is all plain enough ; she is going to bed.”

David had entered the house. The others took their way back in silence ; none of them interpreted the vision in the same manner, — Monsieur Becker doubted, Minna adored, Wilfrid longed.

Wilfrid was a man about thirty-six years of age. His figure, though broadly developed, was not wanting in symmetry. Like most men who distinguish themselves above their fellows, he was of medium height ; his chest and shoulders were broad, and his neck short, — a characteristic of those whose hearts are near their heads ; his hair was black, thick, and fine ; his eyes, of a yellow brown, had, as it were, a solar brilliancy, which proclaimed with what avidity his nature aspired to Light. Though these strong and virile features were defective through the absence of an inward peace, — granted only to a life without storms or conflicts, — they plainly showed the inexhaustible resources of impetuous senses and the appetites of instinct ; just as every motion revealed the perfection of the man’s physical apparatus, the

flexibility of his senses, and their fidelity when brought into play. This man might contend with savages, and hear, as they do, the tread of enemies in distant forests ; he could follow a scent in the air, a trail on the ground, or see on the horizon the signal of a friend. His sleep was light, like that of all creatures who will not allow themselves to be surprised. His body came quickly into harmony with the climate of any country where his tempestuous life conducted him. Art and science would have admired his organization in the light of a human model. Everything about him was symmetrical and well-balanced, — action and heart, intelligence and will. At first sight he might be classed among purely instinctive beings, who give themselves blindly up to the material wants of life ; but in the very morning of his days he had flung himself into a higher social world, with which his feelings harmonized ; study had widened his mind, reflection had sharpened his power of thought, and the sciences had enlarged his understanding. He had studied human laws, — the working of self-interests brought into conflict by the passions, and he seemed to have early familiarized himself with the abstractions on which societies rest. He had pored over books, — those deeds of dead humanity ; he had spent whole nights of pleasure in every European capital ; he had slept on fields of battle the night before the combat and the night that followed victory. His stormy youth may have flung him on the deck of some corsair and sent him among the contrasting regions of the globe ; thus it was that he knew the

actions of a living humanity. He knew the present and the past, — a double history ; that of to-day, that of other days. Many men have been, like Wilfrid, equally powerful by the Hand, by the Heart, by the Head ; like him, the majority have abused their triple power. But though this man still held by certain outward liens to the slimy side of humanity, he belonged also and positively to the sphere where force is intelligent. In spite of the many veils which enveloped his soul, there were certain ineffable symptoms of this fact which were visible to pure spirits, to the eyes of the child whose innocence has known no breath of evil passions, to the eyes of the old man who has lived to regain his purity.

These signs revealed a Cain for whom there was still hope, — one who seemed as though he were seeking absolution from the ends of the earth. Minna suspected the galley-slave of glory in the man ; Seraphita recognized him. Both admired and both pitied him. Whence came their prescience ? Nothing could be more simple nor yet more extraordinary. As soon as we seek to penetrate the secrets of Nature, where nothing is secret, and where it is only necessary to have the eyes to see, we perceive that the simple produces the marvellous.

“ Seraphitus,” said Minna one evening a few days after Wilfrid’s arrival in Jarvis, “ you read the soul of this stranger while I have only vague impressions of it. He chills me or else he excites me ; but you seem to know the cause of this cold and of this heat ; tell me what it means, for you know all about him.”

“Yes, I have seen the causes,” said Seraphitus, lowering his large eyelids.

“By what power?” asked the curious Minna.

“I have the gift of Specialism,” he answered. “Specialism is an inward sight which can penetrate all things ; you will only understand its full meaning through a comparison. In the great cities of Europe where works are produced by which the human Hand seeks to represent the effects of the moral nature as well as those of the physical nature, there are glorious men who express ideas in marble. The sculptor acts on the stone ; he fashions it ; he puts a realm of ideas into it. There are statues which the hand of man has endowed with the faculty of representing the whole noble side of humanity, or the whole evil side ; most men see in such marbles a human figure and nothing more ; a few other men, a little higher in the scale of being, perceive a fraction of the thoughts expressed in the statue ; but the Initiates in the secrets of art are of the same intellect as the sculptor ; they see in his work the whole universe of his thought. Such persons are in themselves the principles of art ; they bear within them a mirror which reflects nature in her slightest manifestations. Well ! so it is with me ; I have within me a mirror before which the moral nature, with its causes and its effects, appears and is reflected. Entering thus into the consciousness of others I am able to divine both the future and the past. How ? do you still ask how ? Imagine that the marble statue is the body of a man, a piece of statuary in which we see the emotion, sentiment, passion, vice

or crime, virtue or repentance which the creating hand has put into it, and you will then comprehend how it is that I read the soul of this foreigner — though what I have said does not explain the gift of Specialism; for to conceive the nature of that gift we must possess it.”

Though Wilfrid belonged to the two first divisions of humanity, the men of force and the men of thought, yet his excesses, his tumultuous life, and his misdeeds had often turned him towards Faith; for doubt has two sides; a side to the light and a side to the darkness. Wilfrid had too closely clasped the world under its forms of Matter and of Mind not to have acquired that thirst for the unknown, that longing to *go beyond* which lay their grasp upon the men who know, and wish, and will. But neither his knowledge, nor his actions, nor his will, had found direction. He had fled from social life from necessity; as a great criminal seeks the cloister. Remorse, that virtue of weak beings, did not touch him. Remorse is impotence, impotence which sins again. Repentance alone is powerful; it ends all. But in traversing the world, which he made his cloister, Wilfrid had found no balm for his wounds; he saw nothing in nature to which he could attach himself. In him, despair had dried the sources of desire. He was one of those beings who, having gone through all passions and come out victorious, have nothing more to raise in their hot-beds, and who, lacking opportunity to put themselves at the head of their fellow-men to trample under iron heel entire populations, buy, at the price of

a horrible martyrdom, the faculty of ruining themselves in some belief, — rocks sublime, which await the touch of a wand that comes not to bring the waters gushing from their far-off springs.

Led by a scheme of his restless, inquiring life to the shores of Norway, the sudden arrival of winter had detained the wanderer at Jarvis. The day on which, for the first time, he saw Seraphita, the whole past of his life faded from his mind. The young girl excited emotions which he had thought could never be revived. The ashes gave forth a lingering flame at the first murmurings of that voice. Who has ever felt himself return to youth and purity after growing cold and numb with age and soiled with impurity? Suddenly, Wilfrid loved as he had never loved; he loved secretly, with faith, with fear, with inward madness. His life was stirred to the very source of being at the mere thought of seeing Seraphita. As he listened to her he was transported into unknown worlds; he was mute before her, she magnetized him. There, beneath the snows, among the glaciers, bloomed the celestial flower to which his hopes, so long betrayed, aspired; the sight of which awakened ideas of freshness, purity, and faith which grouped about his soul and lifted it to higher regions, — as Angels bear to heaven the Elect in those symbolic pictures inspired by the guardian spirit of a great master. Celestial perfumes softened the granite hardness of the rocky scene; light endowed with speech shed its divine melodies on the path of him who looked to heaven. After emptying the cup of terrestrial love which his

teeth had bitten as he drank it, he saw before him the chalice of salvation where the limpid waters sparkled, making thirsty for ineffable delights whoever dare apply his lips burning with a faith so strong that the crystal shall not be shattered.

But Wilfrid now encountered the wall of brass for which he had been seeking up and down the earth. He went impetuously to Seraphita, meaning to express the whole force and bearing of a passion under which he bounded like the fabled horse beneath the iron horseman, firm in his saddle, whom nothing moves while the efforts of the fiery animal only made the rider heavier and more solid. He sought her to relate his life, — to prove the grandeur of his soul by the grandeur of his faults, to show the ruins of his desert. But no sooner had he crossed her threshold, and found himself within the zone of those eyes of scintillating azure, that met no limits forward and left none behind, than he grew calm and submissive, as a lion, springing on his prey in the plains of Africa, receives from the wings of the wind a message of love, and stops his bound. A gulf opened before him, into which his frenzied words fell and disappeared, and from which uprose a voice which changed his being; he became as a child, a child of sixteen, timid and frightened before this maiden with serene brow, this white figure whose inalterable calm was like the cruel impassibility of human justice. The combat between them had never ceased until this evening, when with a glance she brought him down, as a falcon making his dizzy

spirals in the air around his prey causes it to fall stupefied to earth, before carrying it to his eyrie.

We may note within ourselves many a long struggle the end of which is one of our own actions, — struggles which are, as it were, the reverse side of humanity. This reverse side belongs to God; the obverse side to men. More than once Seraphita had proved to Wilfrid that she knew this hidden and ever varied side, which is to the majority of men a second being. Often she said to him in her dove-like voice: “Why all this vehemence?” when on his way to her he had sworn she should be his. Wilfrid was, however, strong enough to raise the cry of revolt to which he had given utterance in Monsieur Becker’s study. The narrative of the old pastor had calmed him. Sceptical and derisive as he was, he saw belief like a sidereal brilliance dawning on his life. He asked himself if Seraphita were not an exile from the higher spheres seeking the homeward way. The fanciful deifications of all ordinary lovers he could not give to this lily of Norway in whose divinity he believed. Why lived she here beside this fiord? What did she? Questions that received no answer filled his mind. Above all, what was about to happen between them? What fate had brought him there? To him, Seraphita was the motionless marble, light nevertheless as a vapor, which Minna had seen that day poised above the precipices of the Falberg. Could she thus stand on the edge of all gulfs without danger, without a tremor of the arching eyebrows, or a quiver of the light of the eye? If

his love was to be without hope, it was not without curiosity.

From the moment when Wilfrid suspected the ethereal nature of the enchantress who had told him the secrets of his life in melodious utterance, he had longed to try to subject her, to keep her to himself, to tear her from the heaven where, perhaps, she was awaited. Earth and Humanity seized their prey; he would imitate them. His pride, the only sentiment through which man can long be exalted, would make him happy in this triumph for the rest of his life. The idea sent the blood boiling through his veins, and his heart swelled. If he did not succeed, he would destroy her, — it is so natural to destroy that which we cannot possess, to deny what we cannot comprehend, to insult that which we envy.

On the morrow, Wilfrid, filled with ideas which the extraordinary events of the previous night naturally awakened in his mind, resolved to question David, and went to find him on pretext of asking after Seraphita's health. Though Monsieur Becker spoke of the old servant as falling into dotage, Wilfrid relied on his own perspicacity to discover scraps of truth in the torrent of the old man's rambling talk.

David had the immovable, undecided, physiognomy of an octogenarian. Under his white hair lay a forehead lined with wrinkles like the stone courses of a ruined wall; and his face was furrowed like the bed of a dried-up torrent. His life seemed to have retreated wholly to the eyes, where light still shone,

though its gleams were obscured by a mistiness which seemed to indicate either an active mental alienation or the stupid stare of drunkenness. His slow and heavy movements betrayed the glacial weight of age, and communicated an icy influence to whoever allowed themselves to look long at him, — for he possessed the magnetic force of torpor. His limited intelligence was only roused by the sight, the hearing, or the recollection of his mistress. She was the soul of this wholly material fragment of an existence. Any one seeing David alone by himself would have thought him a corpse; let Seraphita enter, let her voice be heard, or a mention of her be made, and the dead came forth from his grave and recovered speech and motion. The dry bones were not more truly awakened by the divine breath in the valley of Jehoshaphat, and never was that apocalyptic vision better realized than in this Lazarus issuing from the sepulchre into life at the voice of a young girl. His language, which was always figurative and often incomprehensible, prevented the inhabitants of the village from talking with him; but they respected a mind that deviated so utterly from common ways, — a thing which the masses instinctively admire.

Wilfrid found him in the antechamber, apparently asleep beside the stove. Like a dog who recognizes a friend of the family, the old man raised his eyes, saw the foreigner, and did not stir.

“Where is she?” inquired Wilfrid, sitting down beside him.

David fluttered his fingers in the air as if to express the flight of a bird.

“Does she still suffer?” asked Wilfrid.

“Beings vowed to Heaven are able so to suffer that suffering does not lessen their love; this is the mark of the true faith,” answered the old man, solemnly, like an instrument which, on being touched, gives forth an accidental note.

“Who taught you those words?”

“The Spirit.”

“What happened to her last night? Did you force your way past the Vertumni standing sentinel? did you evade the Mammons?”

“Yes;” answered David, as though awaking from a dream.

The misty gleam of his eyes melted into a ray that came direct from the soul and made it by degrees brilliant as that of an eagle, as intelligent as that of a poet.

“What did you see?” asked Wilfrid, astonished at this sudden change.

“I saw Species and Shapes; I heard the Spirit of all things; I beheld the revolt of the Evil Ones; I listened to the words of the Good. Seven devils came, and seven archangels descended from on high. The archangels stood apart and looked on through veils. The devils were close by; they shone, they acted. Mammon came on his pearly shell in the shape of a beautiful naked woman; her snowy body dazzled the eye, no human form ever equalled it; and he said, ‘I am

Pleasure; thou shalt possess me!’ Lucifer, prince of serpents, was there in sovereign robes; his Manhood was glorious as the beauty of an angel, and he said, ‘Humanity shall be at thy feet!’ The Queen of misers, — she who gives back naught that she has ever received, — the Sea, came wrapped in her virent mantle; she opened her bosom, she showed her gems, she brought forth her treasures and offered them; waves of sapphire and of emerald came at her bidding; her hidden wonders stirred, they rose to the surface of her breast, they spoke; the rarest pearl of Ocean spread its iridescent wings and gave voice to its marine melodies, saying, ‘Twin daughter of suffering, we are sisters! await me; let us go together; all I need is to become a Woman.’ The Bird with the wings of an eagle and the paws of a lion, the head of a woman and the body of a horse, the Animal, fell down before her and licked her feet, and promised seven hundred years of plenty to her best-beloved daughter. Then came the most formidable of all, the Child, weeping at her knees, and saying, ‘Wilt thou leave me, feeble and suffering as I am? oh, my mother, stay!’ and he played with her, and shed languor on the air, and the Heavens themselves had pity for his wail. The Virgin of pure song brought forth her choirs to relax the soul. The Kings of the East came with their slaves, their armies, and their women; the Wounded asked her for succor, the Sorrowful stretched forth their hands: ‘Do not leave us! do not leave us!’ they cried. I, too, I cried, ‘Do not leave us! we adore thee! stay!’

Flowers, bursting from the seed, bathed her in their fragrance which uttered, 'Stay!' The giant Enakim came forth from Jupiter, leading Gold and its friends and all the Spirits of the Astral Regions which are joined with him, and they said, 'We are thine for seven hundred years.' At last came Death on his pale horse, crying, 'I will obey thee!' One and all fell prostrate before her. Could you but have seen them! They covered as it were a vast plain, and they cried aloud to her, 'We have nurtured thee, thou art our child; do not abandon us!' At length Life issued from her Ruby Waters, and said, 'I will not leave thee!' then, finding Seraphita silent, she flamed upon her as the sun, crying out, 'I am light!' 'THE LIGHT is there!' cried Seraphita, pointing to the clouds where stood the archangels; but she was wearied out; Desire had wrung her nerves, she could only cry, 'My God! my God!' Ah! many an Angelic Spirit, scaling the mountain and nigh to the summit, has set his foot upon a rolling stone which plunged him back into the abyss! All these lost Spirits adored her constancy; they stood around her, — a choir without a song, — weeping and whispering, 'Courage!' At last she conquered; Desire — let loose upon her in every Shape and every Species — was vanquished. She stood in prayer, and when at last her eyes were lifted she saw the feet of Angels circling in the Heavens."

"She saw the feet of Angels?" repeated Wilfrid.

"Yes," said the old man.

"Was it a dream that she told you?" asked Wilfrid.

“A dream as real as your life,” answered David;
“I was there.”

The calm assurance of the old servant affected Wilfrid powerfully. He went away asking himself whether these visions were any less extraordinary than those he had read of in Swedenborg the night before.

“If Spirits exist, they must act,” he was saying to himself as he entered the parsonage, where he found Monsieur Becker alone.

“Dear pastor,” he said, “Seraphita is connected with us in form only, and even that form is inexplicable. Do not think me a madman or a lover; a profound conviction cannot be argued with. Convert my belief into scientific theories, and let us try to enlighten each other. To-morrow evening we shall both be with her.”

“What then?” said Monsieur Becker.

“If her eye ignores space,” replied Wilfrid, “if her thought is an intelligent sight which enables her to perceive all things in their essence, and to connect them with the general evolution of the universe, if, in a word, she sees and knows all, let us seat the Pytho-ness on her tripod, let us force this pitiless eagle by threats to spread its wings! Help me! I breathe a fire which burns my vitals; I must quench it or it will consume me. I have found a prey at last, and it shall be mine!”

“The conquest will be difficult,” said the pastor,
“because this girl is —”

“Is what?” cried Wilfrid.

“Mad,” said the old man.

“I will not dispute her madness, but neither must you dispute her wonderful powers. Dear Monsieur Becker, she has often confounded me with her learning. Has she travelled?”

“From her house to the fiord, no further.”

“Never left this place!” exclaimed Wilfrid. “Then she must have read immensely.”

“Not a page, not one iota! I am the only person who possesses any books in Jarvis. The works of Swedenborg — the only books that were in the château — you see before you. She has never looked into a single one of them.”

“Have you tried to talk with her?”

“What good would that do?”

“Does no one live with her in that house?”

“She has no friends but you and Minna, nor any servant except old David.”

“It cannot be that she knows nothing of science nor of art.”

“Who should teach her?” said the pastor.

“But if she can discuss such matters pertinently, as she has often done with me, what do you make of it?”

“The girl may have acquired through years of silence the faculties enjoyed by Apollonius of Tyana and other pretended sorcerers burned by the Inquisition, which did not choose to admit the fact of second-sight.

“If she can speak Arabic, what would you say to that?”

“The history of medical science gives many authentic instances of girls who have spoken languages entirely unknown to them.”

“What can I do?” exclaimed Wilfrid. “She knows of secrets in my past life known only to me.”

“I shall be curious to see if she can tell me thoughts that I have confided to no living person,” said Monsieur Becker.

Minna entered the room.

“Well, my daughter, and how is your familiar spirit?”

“He suffers, father,” she answered, bowing to Wilfrid. “Human passions, clothed in their false riches, surrounded him all night, and showed him all the glories of the world. But you think these things mere tales.”

“Tales as beautiful to those who read them in their brains as the ‘Arabian Nights’ to common minds,” said the pastor, smiling.

“Did not Satan carry our Saviour to the pinnacle of the Temple, and show him all the kingdoms of the world?” she said.

“The Evangelists,” replied her father, “did not correct their copies very carefully, and several versions are in existence.”

“You believe in the reality of these visions?” said Wilfrid to Minna.

“Who can doubt when he relates them.”

“He?” demanded Wilfrid. “Who?”

“He who is there,” replied Minna, motioning towards the château.

“Are you speaking of Seraphita?” he said.

The young girl bent her head, and looked at him with an expression of gentle mischief.

“You too!” exclaimed Wilfrid, “you take pleasure in confounding me. Who and what is she? What do you think of her?”

“What I feel is inexplicable,” said Minna, blushing.

“You are all crazy!” cried the pastor.

“Farewell, until to-morrow evening,” said Wilfrid.

IV.

THE CLOUDS OF THE SANCTUARY.

THERE are pageants in which all the material splendors that man arrays co-operate. Nations of slaves and divers have searched the sands of ocean and the bowels of earth for the pearls and diamonds which adorn the spectators. Transmitted as heirlooms from generation to generation, these treasures have shone on consecrated brows and could be the most faithful of historians had they speech. They know the joys and sorrows of the great and those of the small. Everywhere do they go ; they are worn with pride at festivals, carried in despair to usurers, borne off in triumph amid blood and pillage, enshrined in masterpieces conceived by art for their protection. None, except the pearl of Cleopatra, has been lost. The Great and the Fortunate assemble to witness the coronation of some king, whose trappings are the work of men's hands, but the purple of whose raiment is less glorious than that of the flowers of the field. These festivals, splendid in light, bathed in music which the hand of man creates, aye, all the triumphs of that hand are subdued by a thought, crushed by a sentiment. The Mind can illumine in a man and round a man a light more vivid, can open his ear to more melodious harmonies, can seat him on

clouds of shining constellations and teach him to question them. The Heart can do still greater things. Man may come into the presence of one sole being and find in a single word, a single look, an influence so weighty to bear, of so luminous a light, so penetrating a sound, that he succumbs and kneels before it. The most real of all splendors are not in outward things, they are within us. A single secret of science is a realm of wonders to the man of learning. Do the trumpets of Power, the jewels of Wealth, the music of Joy, or a vast concourse of people attend his mental festival? No, he finds his glory in some dim retreat where, perchance, a pallid suffering man whispers a single word into his ear; that word, like a torch lighted in a mine, reveals to him a Science. All human ideas, arrayed in every attractive form which Mystery can invent surrounded a blind man seated in a wayside ditch. Three worlds, the Natural, the Spiritual, the Divine, with all their spheres, opened their portals to a Florentine exile; he walked attended by the Happy and the Unhappy; by those who prayed and those who moaned; by angels and by souls in hell. When the Sent of God, who knew and could accomplish all things, appeared to three of his disciples it was at eventide, at the common table of the humblest of inns; and then and there the Light broke forth, shattering Material Forms, illuminating the Spiritual Faculties, so that they saw him in his glory, and the earth lay at their feet like a cast-off sandal.

Monsieur Becker, Wilfrid, and Minna were all under

the influence of fear as they took their way to meet the extraordinary being whom each desired to question. To them, in their several ways, the Swedish castle had grown to mean some gigantic representation, some spectacle like those whose colors and masses are skillfully and harmoniously marshalled by the poets, and whose personages, imaginary actors to men, are real to those who begin to penetrate the Spiritual World. On the tiers of this Coliseum Monsieur Becker seated the gray legions of Doubt, the stern ideas, the specious formulas of Dispute. He convoked the various antagonistic worlds of philosophy and religion, and they all appeared, in the guise of a fleshless shape, like that in which art embodies Time, — an old man bearing in one hand a scythe, in the other a broken globe, the human universe.

Wilfrid had bidden to the scene his earliest illusions and his latest hopes, human destiny and its conflicts, religion and its conquering powers.

Minna saw heaven confusedly by glimpses; love raised a curtain wrought with mysterious images, and the melodious sounds which met her ear redoubled her curiosity.

To all three, therefore, this evening was to be what that other evening had been for the pilgrims to Emmaüs, what a vision was to Dante, an inspiration to Homer, — to them, three aspects of the world revealed, veils rent away, doubts dissipated, darkness illumined. Humanity in all its moods expecting light could not be better represented than here by this young girl, this man in

the vigor of his age, and these old men, of whom one was learned enough to doubt, the other ignorant enough to believe. Never was any scene more simple in appearance, nor more portentous in reality.

When they entered the room, ushered in by old David, they found Seraphita standing by a table on which were served the various dishes which compose a "tea;" a form of collation which in the North takes the place of wine and its pleasures, — reserved more exclusively for Southern climes. Certainly nothing proclaimed in her, or in him, a being with the strange power of appearing under two distinct forms; nothing about her betrayed the manifold powers which she wielded. Like a careful housewife attending to the comfort of her guests, she ordered David to put more wood into the stove.

"Good evening, my neighbors," she said. "Dear Monsieur Becker, you do right to come; you see me living for the last time, perhaps. This winter has killed me. Will you sit there?" she said to Wilfrid. "And you, Minna, here?" pointing to a chair beside her. "I see you have brought your embroidery. Did you invent that stitch? the design is very pretty. For whom is it, — your father, or monsieur?" she added, turning to Wilfrid. "Surely we ought to give him, before we part, a remembrance of the daughters of Norway."

"Did you suffer much yesterday?" asked Wilfrid.

"It was nothing," she answered; "the suffering gladdened me; it was necessary, to enable me to leave this life."

“Then death does not alarm you?” said Monsieur Becker, smiling, for he did not think her ill.

“No, dear pastor; there are two ways of dying: to some, death is victory, to others, defeat.”

“Do you think that you have conquered?” asked Minna.

“I do not know,” she said, “perhaps I have only taken a step in the path.”

The lustrous splendor of her brow grew dim, her eyes were veiled beneath slow-dropping lids; a simple movement which affected the prying guests and kept them silent. Monsieur Becker was the first to recover courage.

“Dear child,” he said, “you are truth itself, and you are ever kind. I would ask of you to-night something other than the dainties of your tea-table. If we may believe certain persons, you know amazing things; if this be true, would it not be charitable in you to solve a few of our doubts?”

“Ah!” she said smiling, “I walk on the clouds. I visit the depths of the fiord; the sea is my steed and I bridle it; I know where the singing flower grows, and the talking light descends, and fragrant colors shine! I wear the seal of Solomon; I am a fairy; I cast my orders to the wind which, like an abject slave, fulfils them; my eyes can pierce the earth and behold its treasures; for lo! am I not the virgin to whom the pearls dart from their ocean depths and—”

“—who led me safely to the summit of the Falberg?” said Minna, interrupting her.

“Thou! thou too!” exclaimed the strange being, with a luminous glance at the young girl which filled her soul with trouble. “Had I not the faculty of reading through your foreheads the desires which have brought you here, should I be what you think I am?” she said, encircling all three with her controlling glance, to David’s great satisfaction. The old man rubbed his hands with pleasure as he left the room.

“Ah!” she resumed after a pause, “you have come, all of you, with the curiosity of children. You, my poor Monsieur Becker, have asked yourself how it was possible that a girl of seventeen should know even a single one of those secrets which men of science seek with their noses to the earth, — instead of raising their eyes to heaven. Were I to tell you how and at what point the plant merges into the animal you would begin to doubt your doubts. You have plotted to question me; you will admit that?”

“Yes, dear Seraphita,” answered Wilfrid; “but the desire is a natural one to men, is it not?”

“You will bore this dear child with such topics,” she said, passing her hand lightly over Minna’s hair with a caressing gesture.

The young girl raised her eyes and seemed as though she longed to lose herself in him.

“Speech is the endowment of us all,” resumed the mysterious creature, gravely. “Woe to him who keeps silence, even in a desert, believing that no one hears him; all voices speak and all ears listen here below. Speech moves the universe. Monsieur Becker,

I desire to say nothing unnecessarily. I know the difficulties that beset your mind; would you not think it a miracle if I were now to lay bare the past history of your consciousness? Well, the miracle shall be accomplished. You have never admitted to yourself the full extent of your doubts. I alone, immovable in my faith, I can show it to you; I can terrify you with yourself.

“You stand on the darkest side of Doubt. You do not believe in God, — although you know it not, — and all things here below are secondary to him who rejects the first principle of things. Let us leave aside the fruitless discussions of false philosophy. The spiritualist generations made as many and as vain efforts to deny Matter as the materialist generations have made to deny Spirit. Why such discussions? Does not man himself offer irrefragable proof of both systems? Do we not find in him material things and spiritual things? None but a madman can refuse to see in the human body a fragment of Matter; your natural sciences, when they decompose it, find little difference between its elements and those of other animals. On the other hand, the idea produced in man by the comparison of many objects has never seemed to any one to belong to the domain of Matter. As to this, I offer no opinion. I am now concerned with your doubts, not with my certainties. To you, as to the majority of thinkers, the relations between things, the reality of which is proved to you by your sensations and which you possess the faculty to

discover, do not seem Material. The Natural universe of things and beings ends, in man, with the Spiritual universe of similarities or differences which he perceives among the innumerable forms of Nature, — relations so multiplied as to seem infinite; for if, up to the present time, no one has been able to enumerate the separate terrestrial creations, who can reckon their correlations? Is not the fraction which you know, in relation to their totality, what a single number is to infinity? Here, then, you fall into a perception of the infinite which undoubtedly obliges you to conceive of a purely Spiritual world.

“ Thus man himself offers sufficient proof of the two orders, — Matter and Spirit. In him culminates a visible finite universe; in him begins a universe invisible and infinite, — two worlds unknown to each other. Have the pebbles of the fiord a perception of their combined being? have they a consciousness of the colors they present to the eye of man? do they hear the music of the waves that lap them? Let us therefore spring over and not attempt to sound the abysmal depths presented to our minds in the union of a Material universe and a Spiritual universe, — a creation visible, ponderable, tangible, terminating in a creation invisible, imponderable, intangible; completely dissimilar, separated by the void, yet united by indisputable bonds and meeting in a being who derives equally from the one and from the other! Let us mingle in one world these two worlds, absolutely irreconcilable to your philosophies, but conjoined by fact. However abstract man may suppose the relation which

binds two things together, the line of junction is perceptible. How? Where? We are not now in search of the vanishing point where Matter subtilizes. If such were the question, I cannot see why He who has, by physical relations, studded with stars at immeasurable distances the heavens which veil Him, may not have created solid substances, nor why you deny Him the faculty of giving a body to thought.

“ Thus your invisible moral universe and your visible physical universe are one and the same matter. We will not separate properties from substances, nor objects from effects. All that exists, all that presses upon us and overwhelms us from above or from below, before us or in us, all that which our eyes and our minds perceive, all these named and unnamed things compose — in order to fit the problem of Creation to the measure of your logic — a block of finite Matter; but were it infinite, God would still not be its master. Now, reasoning with your views, dear pastor, no matter in what way God the infinite is concerned with this block of finite Matter, He cannot exist and retain the attributes with which man invests Him. Seek Him in facts, and He is not; ask reason to reveal Him, and again He is not; spiritually and materially, you have made God impossible. Listen to the Word of human Reason forced to its ultimate conclusions.

“ In bringing God face to face with the Great Whole, we see that only two states are possible between them, — either God and Matter are contemporaneous, or God existed alone before Matter. Were Reason — the light

that has guided the human race from the dawn of its existence — accumulated in one brain, even that mighty brain could not invent a third mode of being without suppressing both Matter and God. Let human philosophies pile mountain upon mountain of words and of ideas, let religions accumulate images and beliefs, revelations and mysteries, you must face at last this terrible dilemma and choose between the two propositions which compose it; you have no option, and one as much as the other leads human reason to Doubt.

“ The problem thus established, what signifies Spirit or Matter? Why trouble about the march of the worlds in one direction or in another, since the Being who guides them is shown to be an absurdity? Why continue to ask whether man is approaching heaven or receding from it, whether creation is rising towards Spirit or descending towards Matter, if the questioned universe gives no reply? What signifies theogonies and their armies, theologies and their dogmas, since whichever side of the problem is man’s choice, his God exists not? Let us for a moment take up the first proposition, and suppose God contemporaneous with Matter. Is subjection to the action or the co-existence of an alien substance consistent with being God at all? In such a system, would not God become a secondary agent compelled to organize Matter? If so, who compelled Him? Between His material gross companion and Himself, who was the arbiter? Who paid the wages of the six days’ labor imputed to the great Designer? Has any determining force been found which was neither

God nor Matter? God being regarded as the manufacturer of the machinery of the worlds, is it not as ridiculous to call Him God as to call the slave who turned a grindstone a Roman citizen? Besides, another difficulty, as insoluble to this supreme human reason as it is to God, presents itself.

“If we carry the problem higher, shall we not be like the Hindus, who put the world upon a tortoise, the tortoise on an elephant, and do not know on what the feet of their elephant may rest? This supreme will, issuing from the contest between God and Matter, this God, this more than God, can He have existed throughout eternity without willing what He afterwards willed, — admitting that Eternity can be divided into two eras. No matter where God is, what becomes of His intuitive intelligence if He did not know His ultimate thought? Which, then, is the true Eternity, — the created Eternity or the uncreated? But if God throughout all time did will the world such as it is, this new necessity, which harmonizes with the idea of sovereign intelligence, implies the co-eternity of Matter. Whether Matter be co-eternal by a divine will necessarily accordant with itself from the beginning, or whether Matter be co-eternal of its own being, the power of God, which must be absolute, perishes if His will is circumscribed; for in that case God would find within Him a determining force which would control Him. Can He be God if He can no more separate Himself from His creation in a past eternity than in the coming eternity?

“ This face of the problem is insoluble in its cause. Let us now inquire into its effects. If a God compelled to have created the world from all eternity seems inexplicable, He is quite as unintelligible in perpetual cohesion with His work. God, constrained to live eternally united to His creation is held down to His first position as workman. Can you conceive of a God who shall be neither independent of nor dependent on His work? Could He destroy that work without challenging Himself? Ask yourself, and decide! Whether He destroys it some day, or whether He never destroys it, either way is fatal to the attributes without which God cannot exist. Is the world an experiment? is it a perishable form to which destruction must come? If it is, is not God inconsistent and impotent? inconsistent, because He ought to have seen the result before the attempt, — moreover why should He delay to destroy that which He is to destroy? — impotent, for how else could He have created an imperfect man?

“ If an imperfect creation contradicts the faculties which man attributes to God we are forced back upon the question, Is creation perfect? The idea is in harmony with that of a God supremely intelligent who could make no mistakes; but then, what means the degradation of His work, and its regeneration? Moreover, a perfect world is, necessarily, indestructible; its forms would not perish, it could neither advance nor recede, it would revolve in the everlasting circumference from which it would never issue. In that case God would be dependent on His work; it would be co

eternal with Him ; and so we fall back into one of the propositions most antagonistic to God. If the world is imperfect, it can progress ; if perfect, it is stationary. On the other hand, if it be impossible to admit of a progressive God ignorant through a past eternity of the results of His creative work, can there be a stationary God? would not that imply the triumph of Matter? would it not be the greatest of all negations? Under the first hypothesis God perishes through weakness ; under the second through the force of His inertia.

“ Therefore, to all sincere minds the supposition that Matter, in the conception and execution of the worlds, is contemporaneous with God, is to deny God. Forced to choose, in order to govern the nations, between the two alternatives of the problem, whole generations have preferred this solution of it. Hence the doctrine of the two principles of Magianism, brought from Asia and adopted in Europe under the form of Satan warring with the Eternal Father. But this religious formula and the innumerable aspects of divinity that have sprung from it are surely crimes against the Majesty Divine. What other term can we apply to the belief which sets up as a rival to God a personification of Evil, striving eternally against the Omnipotent Mind without the possibility of ultimate triumph? Your statics declare that two Forces thus pitted against each other are reciprocally rendered null.

“ Do you turn back, therefore, to the other side of the problem, and say that God pre-existed, original, alone?

“I will not go over the preceding arguments (which here return in full force) as to the severance of Eternity into two parts; nor the questions raised by the progression or the immobility of the worlds; let us look only at the difficulties inherent to this second theory. If God pre-existed alone, the world must have emanated from Him; Matter was therefore drawn from His essence; consequently Matter in itself is non-existent; all forms are veils to cover the Divine Spirit. If this be so, the World is Eternal, and also it must be God. Is not this proposition even more fatal than the former to the attributes conferred on God by human reason? How can the actual condition of Matter be explained if we suppose it to issue from the bosom of God and to be ever united with Him? Is it possible to believe that the All-Powerful, supremely good in His essence and in His faculties, has engendered things dissimilar to Himself. Must He not in all things and through all things be like unto Himself? Can there be in God certain evil parts of which at some future day he may rid Himself? — a conjecture less offensive and absurd than terrible, for the reason that it drags back into Him the two principles which the preceding theory proved to be inadmissible. God must be ONE; He cannot be divided without renouncing the most important condition of His existence. It is therefore impossible to admit of a fraction of God which yet is not God. This hypothesis seemed so criminal to the Roman Church that she has made the omnipresence of God in the least particles of the Eucharist an article of faith.

“But how then can we imagine an omnipotent mind which does not triumph? How associate it unless in triumph with Nature? But Nature is not triumphant; she seeks, combines, remodels, dies, and is born again; she is even more convulsed when creating than when all was fusion; Nature suffers, groans, is ignorant, degenerates, does evil; deceives herself, annihilates herself, disappears, and begins again. If God is associated with Nature, how can we explain the inoperative indifference of the divine principle? Wherefore death? How came it that Evil, king of the earth, was born of a God supremely good in His essence and in His faculties, who can produce nothing that is not made in His own image?

“But if, from this relentless conclusion which leads at once to absurdity, we pass to details, what end are we to assign to the world? If all is God, all is reciprocally cause and effect; all is ONE as God is ONE, and we can perceive neither points of likeness nor points of difference. Can the real end be a rotation of Matter which subtilizes and disappears? In whatever sense it were done, would not this mechanical trick of Matter issuing from God and returning to God seem a sort of child’s play? Why should God make himself gross with Matter? Under which form is he most God? Which has the ascendant, Matter or Spirit, when neither can in any way do wrong? Who can comprehend the Deity engaged in this perpetual business, by which he divides Himself into two Natures, one of which knows nothing, while the other knows all? Can you

conceive of God amusing Himself in the form of man, laughing at His own efforts, dying Friday, to be born again Sunday, and continuing this play from age to age, knowing the end from all eternity, and telling nothing to Himself, the Creature, of what He the Creator, does? The God of the preceding hypothesis, a God so nugatory by the very power of His inertia, seems the more possible of the two if we are compelled to choose between the impossibilities with which this God, so dull a jester, fusillades Himself when two sections of humanity argue face to face, weapons in hand.

“However absurd this outcome of the second problem may seem, it was adopted by half the human race in the sunny lands where smiling mythologies were created. Those amorous nations were consistent; with them all was God, even Fear and its dastardy, even crime and its bacchanals. If we accept pantheism, — the religion of many a great human genius, — who shall say where the greater reason lies? Is it with the savage, free in the desert, clothed in his nudity, listening to the sun, talking to the sea, sublime and always true in his deeds whatever they may be; or shall we find it in civilized man, who derives his chief enjoyments through lies; who wrings Nature and all her resources to put a musket on his shoulder; who employs his intellect to hasten the hour of his death and to create diseases out of pleasures? When the rake of pestilence and the ploughshare of war and the demon of desolation have passed over a corner of the globe and obliterated all things, who will be found to have the greater reason, —

the Nubian savage or the patrician of Thebes? Your doubts descend the scale, they go from heights to depths, they embrace all, the end as well as the means.

“ But if the physical world seems inexplicable, the moral world presents still stronger arguments against God. Where, then, is progress? If all things are indeed moving toward perfection why do we die young? why do not nations perpetuate themselves? The world having issued from God and being contained in God can it be stationary? Do we live once, or do we live always? If we live once, hurried onward by the march of the Great-Whole, a knowledge of which has not been given to us, let us act as we please. If we are eternal, let things take their course. Is the created being guilty if he exists at the instant of the transitions? If he sins at the moment of a great transformation will he be punished for it after being its victim? What becomes of the Divine goodness if we are not transferred to the regions of the blest — should any such exist? What becomes of God’s prescience if He is ignorant of the results of the trials to which He subjects us? What is this alternative offered to man by all religions, — either to boil in some eternal cauldron or to walk in white robes, a palm in his hand and a halo round his head? Can it be that this pagan invention is the final word of God? Where is the generous soul who does not feel that the calculating virtue which seeks the eternity of pleasure offered by all religions to whoever fulfils at stray moments certain fanciful

and often unnatural conditions, is unworthy of man and of God? Is it not a mockery to give to man impetuous senses and forbid him to satisfy them? Besides, what mean these ascetic objections if Good and Evil are equally abolished? Does Evil exist? If substance in all its forms is God, then Evil is God. The faculty of reasoning as well as the faculty of feeling having been given to man to use, nothing can be more excusable in him than to seek to know the meaning of human suffering and the prospects of the future.

“If these rigid and rigorous arguments lead to such conclusions confusion must reign. The world would have no fixedness; nothing would advance, nothing would pause, all would change, nothing would be destroyed, all would reappear after self-renovation; for if your mind does not clearly demonstrate to you an end, it is equally impossible to demonstrate the destruction of the smallest particle of Matter; Matter can transform but not annihilate itself.

“Though blind force may provide arguments for the atheist, intelligent force is inexplicable; for if it emanates from God, why should it meet with obstacles? ought not its triumph to be immediate? Where is God? If the living cannot perceive Him, can the dead find Him? Crumble, ye idolatries and ye religions! Fall, feeble keystones of all social arches, powerless to retard the decay, the death, the oblivion that have overtaken all nations however firmly founded! Fall, morality and justice! our crimes are purely relative; they are divine effects whose causes we are not allowed

to know. All is God. Either we are God or God is not! — Child of a century whose every year has laid upon your brow, old man, the ice of its unbelief, here, here is the summing up of your lifetime of thought, of your science and your reflections! Dear Monsieur Becker, you have laid your head on the pillow of Doubt, because it is the easiest of solutions; acting in this respect with the majority of mankind, who say in their hearts: ‘Let us think no more of these problems, since God has not vouchsafed to grant us the algebraic demonstrations that could solve them, while He has given us so many other ways to get from earth to heaven.’

“Tell me, dear pastor, are not these your secret thoughts? Have I evaded the point of any? nay, rather, have I not clearly stated all? First, in the dogma of two principles, — an antagonism in which God perishes for the reason that being All-Powerful He chose to combat. Secondly, in the absurd pantheism where, all being God, God exists no longer. These two sources, from which have flowed all the religions for whose triumph Earth has toiled and prayed, are equally pernicious. Behold in them the double-bladed axe with which you decapitate the white old man whom you enthrone among your painted clouds! And now, to me the axe, I wield it!”

Monsieur Becker and Wilfrid gazed at the young girl with something like terror.

“To believe,” continued Seraphita, in her Woman’s voice, for the Man had finished speaking, “to believe

is a gift. To believe is to feel. To believe in God we must feel God. This feeling is a possession slowly acquired by the human being, just as other astonishing powers which you admire in great men, warriors, artists, scholars, those who know and those who act, are acquired. Thought, that budget of the relations which you perceive among created things, is an intellectual language which can be learned, is it not? Belief, the budget of celestial truths, is also a language as superior to thought as thought is to instinct. This language also can be learned. The Believer answers with a single cry, a single gesture; Faith puts within his hand a flaming sword with which he pierces and illumines all. The Seer attains to heaven and descends not. But there are beings who believe and see, who know and will, who love and pray and wait. Submissive, yet aspiring to the kingdom of light, they have neither the aloofness of the Believer nor the silence of the Seer; they listen and reply. To them the doubt of the twilight ages is not a murderous weapon, but a divining rod; they accept the contest under every form; they train their tongues to every language; they are never angered, though they groan; the acrimony of the aggressor is not in them, but rather the softness and tenuity of light, which penetrates and warms and illumines. To their eyes Doubt is neither an impiety, nor a blasphemy, nor a crime, but a transition through which men return upon their steps in the Darkness, or advance into the Light. This being so, dear pastor, let us reason together.

“ You do not believe in God? Why? God, to your thinking, is incomprehensible, inexplicable. Agreed. I will not reply that to comprehend God in His entirety would be to be God; nor will I tell you that you deny what seems to you inexplicable so as to give me the right to affirm that which to me is believable. There is, for you, one evident fact, which lies within yourself. In you, Matter has ended in intelligence; can you therefore think that human intelligence will end in darkness, doubt, and nothingness? God may seem to you incomprehensible and inexplicable, but you must admit Him to be, in all things purely physical, a splendid and consistent workman. Why should His craft stop short at man, His most finished creation?

“ If that question is not convincing, at least it compels meditation. Happily, although you deny God, you are obliged, in order to establish your doubts, to admit those double-bladed facts, which kill your arguments as much as your arguments kill God. We have also admitted that Matter and Spirit are two creations which do not comprehend each other; that the spiritual world is formed of infinite relations to which the finite material world has given rise; that if no one on earth is able to identify himself by the power of his spirit with the great-whole of terrestrial creations, still less is he able to rise to the knowledge of the relations which the spirit perceives between these creations.

“ We might end the argument here in one word, by denying you the faculty of comprehending God, just as you deny to the pebbles of the fiord the faculties

of counting and of seeing each other. How do you know that the stones themselves do not deny the existence of man, though man makes use of them to build his houses? There is one fact that appals you, — the Infinite; if you feel it within you, why will you not admit its consequences? Can the finite have a perfect knowledge of the infinite? If you cannot perceive those relations which, according to your own admission, are infinite, how can you grasp a sense of the far-off end to which they are converging? Order, the revelation of which is one of your needs, being infinite, can your limited reason apprehend it? Do not ask why man does not comprehend that which he is able to perceive, for he is equally able to perceive that which he does not comprehend. If I prove to you that your mind ignores that which lies within its compass, will you grant that it is impossible for it to conceive whatever is beyond it? This being so, am I not justified in saying to you: ‘One of the two propositions under which God is annihilated before the tribunal of our reason must be true, the other is false. Inasmuch as creation exists, you feel the necessity of an end, and that end should be good, should it not? Now, if Matter terminates in man by intelligence, why are you not satisfied to believe that the end of human intelligence is the Light of the higher spheres, where alone an intuition of that God who seems to you so insoluble a problem is obtained? The species which are beneath you have no conception of the universe, and you have; why should there not be other species above you more

intelligent than your own? Man ought to be better informed than he is about himself before he spends his strength in measuring God. Before attacking the stars that light us, and the higher certainties, ought he not to understand the certainties which are actually about him?’

“But no! to the negations of doubt I ought rather to reply by negations. Therefore I ask you whether there is anything here below so evident that I can put faith in it? I will show you in a moment that you believe firmly in things which act, and yet are not beings; in things which engender thought, and yet are not spirits; in living abstractions which the understanding cannot grasp in any shape, which are in fact nowhere, but which you perceive everywhere; which have, and can have, no name, but which, nevertheless, you have named; and which, like the God of flesh whom you figure to yourself, remain inexplicable, incomprehensible, and absurd. I shall also ask you why, after admitting the existence of these incomprehensible things, you reserve your doubts for God?

“You believe, for instance, in Number, — a base on which you have built the edifice of sciences which you call ‘exact.’ Without Number, what would become of mathematics? Well, what mysterious being endowed with the faculty of living forever could utter, and what language would he compact to word the Number which contains the infinite numbers whose existence is revealed to you by thought? Ask it of the loftiest human genius; he might ponder it for a thousand

years and what would be his answer? You know neither where Number begins, nor where it pauses, nor where it ends. Here you call it Time, there you call it Space. Nothing exists except by Number. Without it, all would be one and the same substance; for Number alone differentiates and qualifies substance. Number is to your Spirit what it is to Matter, an incomprehensible agent. Will you make a Deity of it? Is it a being? Is it a breath emanating from God to organize the material universe where nothing obtains form except by the Divinity which is an effect of Number? The least as well as the greatest of creations are distinguishable from each other by quantities, qualities, dimensions, forces, — all attributes created by Number. The infinitude of Numbers is a fact proved to your soul, but of which no material proof can be given. The mathematician himself tells you that the infinite of numbers exists, but cannot be proved.

“God, dear pastor, is a Number endowed with motion, — felt, but not seen, the Believer will tell you. Like the Unit, He begins Numbers, with which He has nothing in common. The existence of Number depends on the Unit, which without being a number engenders Number. God, dear pastor, is a glorious Unit who has nothing in common with His creations but who, nevertheless, engenders them. Will you not therefore agree with me that you are just as ignorant of where Number begins and ends as you are of where created Eternity begins and ends?

“Why, then, if you believe in Number, do you deny

God? Is not Creation interposed between the Infinite of unorganized substances and the Infinite of the divine spheres, just as the Unit stands between the Cipher of the fractions you have lately named Decimals, and the Infinite of Numbers which you call Wholes? Man alone on earth comprehends Number, that first step of the peristyle which leads to God, and yet his reason stumbles on it! What! you can neither measure nor grasp the first abstraction which God delivers to you, and yet you try to subject His ends to your own tape-line! Suppose that I plunge you into the abyss of Motion, the force that organizes Number. If I tell you that the Universe is naught else than Number and Motion, you would see at once that we speak two different languages. I understand them both; you understand neither.

“Suppose I add that Motion and Number are engendered by the Word, namely the supreme Reason of Seers and Prophets who in the olden time heard the Breath of God beneath which Saul fell to the earth. That Word, you scoff at it, you men, although you well know that all visible works, societies, monuments, deeds, passions, proceed from the breath of your own feeble word, and that without that word you would resemble the African gorilla, the nearest approach to man, the negro. You believe firmly in Number and in Motion, a force and a result both inexplicable, incomprehensible, to the existence of which I may apply the logical dilemma which, as we have seen, prevents you from believing in God. Powerful reasoner that you

are, you do not need that I should prove to you that the Infinite must everywhere be like unto Itself, and that, necessarily, it is One. God alone is Infinite, for surely there cannot be two Infinities, two Ones. If, to make use of human terms, anything demonstrated to you here below seems to you infinite, be sure that within it you will find some one aspect of God. But to continue.

“ You have appropriated to yourself a place in the Infinite of Number ; you have fitted it to your own proportions by creating (if indeed you did create) arithmetic, the basis on which all things rest, even your societies. Just as Number — the only thing in which your self-styled atheists believe — organized physical creations, so arithmetic, in the employ of Number, organized the moral world. This numeration must be absolute, like all else that is true in itself ; but it is purely relative, it does not exist absolutely, and no proof can be given of its reality. In the first place, though Numeration is able to take account of organized substances, it is powerless in relation to unorganized forces, the ones being finite and the others infinite. The man who can conceive the Infinite by his intelligence cannot deal with it in its entirety ; if he could, he would be God. Your Numeration, applying to things finite and not to the Infinite, is therefore true in relation to the details which you are able to perceive, and false in relation to the Whole, which you are unable to perceive. Though Nature is like unto herself in the organizing forces or in her principles which are infinite, she is not

so in her finite effects. Thus you will never find in Nature two objects identically alike. In the Natural Order two and two never make four; to do so, four exactly similar units must be had, and you know how impossible it is to find two leaves alike on the same tree, or two trees alike of the same species. This axiom of your numeration, false in visible nature, is equally false in the invisible universe of your abstractions, where the same variance takes place in your ideas, which are the things of the visible world extended by means of their relations; so that the variations here are even more marked than elsewhere. In fact, all being relative to the temperament, strength, habits, and customs of individuals, who never resemble each other, the smallest objects take the color of personal feelings. For instance, man has been able to create units and to give an equal weight and value to bits of gold. Well, take the ducat of the rich man and the ducat of the poor man to a money-changer and they are rated exactly equal, but to the mind of the thinker one is of greater importance than the other; one represents a month of comfort, the other an ephemeral caprice. Two and two, therefore, only make four through a false conception.

“Again: fraction does not exist in Nature, where what you call a fragment is a finished whole. Does it not often happen (have you not many proofs of it?) that the hundredth part of a substance is stronger than what you term the whole of it? If fraction does not exist in the Natural Order, still less shall we find it in the Moral Order, where ideas and sentiments may be

as varied as the species of the Vegetable kingdom and yet be always whole. The theory of fractions is therefore another signal instance of the servility of your mind.

“Thus Number, with its infinite minuteness and its infinite expansion, is a power whose weakest side is known to you, but whose real import escapes your perception. You have built yourself a hut in the Infinite of numbers, you have adorned it with hieroglyphics scientifically arranged and painted, and you cry out, ‘All is here!’

“Let us pass from pure, unmingled Number to corporate Number. Your geometry establishes that a straight line is the shortest way from one point to another, but your astronomy proves that God has proceeded by curves. Here, then, we find two truths equally proved by the same science, — one by the testimony of your senses reinforced by the telescope, the other by the testimony of your mind; and yet the one contradicts the other. Man, liable to err, affirms one, and the Maker of the worlds, whom, so far, you have not detected in error, contradicts it. Who shall decide between rectilinear and curvilinear geometry? between the theory of the straight line and that of the curve? If, in His vast work, the mysterious Artificer, who knows how to reach His ends miraculously fast, never employs a straight line except to cut off an angle and so obtain a curve, neither does man himself always rely upon it. The bullet which he aims direct proceeds by a curve, and when you wish to strike a certain point in space,

you impel your bombshell along its cruel parabola. None of your men of science have drawn from this fact the simple deduction that the Curve is the law of the material worlds and the Straight line that of the Spiritual worlds; one is the theory of finite creations, the other the theory of the infinite. Man, who alone in this world has a knowledge of the Infinite, can alone know the straight line; he alone has the sense of verticality placed in a special organ. A fondness for the creations of the curve would seem to be in certain men an indication of the impurity of their nature still conjoined to the material substances which engender us; and the love of great souls for the straight line seems to show in them an intuition of heaven. Between these two lines there is a gulf fixed like that between the finite and the infinite, between matter and spirit, between man and the idea, between motion and the object moved, between the creature and God. Ask Love the Divine to grant you his wings and you can cross that gulf. Beyond it begins the revelation of the Word.

“No part of those things which you call material is without its own meaning; lines are the boundaries of solid parts and imply a force of action which you suppress in your formulas,—thus rendering those formulas false in relation to substances taken as a whole. Hence the constant destruction of the monuments of human labor, which you supply, unknown to yourselves, with acting properties. Nature has substances; your science combines only their appearances. At every step Nature gives the lie to all your laws. Can you find

a single one that is not disproved by a fact? Your Static laws are at the mercy of a thousand accidents; a fluid can overthrow a solid mountain and prove that the heaviest substances may be lifted by one that is imponderable.

“Your laws on Acoustics and Optics are defied by the sounds which you hear within yourselves in sleep, and by the light of an electric sun whose rays often overcome you. You know no more how light makes itself seen within you, than you know the simple and natural process which changes it on the throats of tropic birds to rubies, sapphires, emeralds, and opals, or keeps it gray and brown on the breasts of the same birds under the cloudy skies of Europe, or whitens it here in the bosom of our polar Nature. You know not how to decide whether color is a faculty with which all substances are endowed, or an effect produced by an effluence of light. You admit the saltiness of the sea without being able to prove that the water is salt at its greatest depth. You recognize the existence of various substances which span what you think to be the void, — substances which are not tangible under any of the forms assumed by Matter, although they put themselves in harmony with Matter in spite of every obstacle.

“All this being so, you believe in the results of Chemistry, although that science still knows no way of gauging the changes produced by the flux and reflux of substances which come and go across your crystals and your instruments on the impalpable filaments of

heat or light conducted and projected by the affinities of metal or vitrified flint. You obtain none but dead substances, from which you have driven the unknown force that holds in check the decomposition of all things here below, and of which cohesion, attraction, vibration, and polarity are but phenomena. Life is the thought of substances ; bodies are only the means of fixing life and holding it to its way. If bodies were beings living of themselves they would be Cause itself, and could not die.

“ When a man discovers the results of the general movement, which is shared by all creations according to their faculty of absorption, you proclaim him mighty in science, as though genius consisted in explaining a thing that is ! Genius ought to cast its eyes beyond effects. Your men of science would laugh if you said to them : ‘ There exist such positive relations between two human beings, one of whom may be here, and the other in Java, that they can at the same instant feel the same sensation, and be conscious of so doing ; they can question each other and reply without mistake ; ’ and yet there are mineral substances which exhibit sympathies as far off from each other as those of which I speak. You believe in the power of the electricity which you find in the magnet and you deny that which emanates from the soul ! According to you, the moon, whose influence upon the tides you think fixed, has none whatever upon the winds, nor upon navigation, nor upon men ; she moves the sea, but she must not affect the sick folk ; she has undeniable relations with one

half of humanity, and nothing at all to do with the other half. These are your vaunted certainties !

“ Let us go a step further. You believe in physics. But your physics begin, like the Catholic religion, with an *act of faith*. Do they not pre-suppose some external force distinct from substance to which it communicates motion? You see its effects, but what is it? where is it? what is the essence of its nature, its life? has it any limits? — and yet, you deny God !

“ Thus, the majority of your scientific axioms, true in their relation to man, are false in relation to the Great Whole. Science is One, but you have divided it. To know the real meaning of the laws of phenomena must we not know the correlations which exist between phenomena and the law of the Whole? There is, in all things, an appearance which strikes your senses ; under that appearance stirs a soul ; a body is there and a faculty is there. Where do you teach the study of the relations which bind things to each other? Nowhere. Consequently you have nothing positive. Your strongest certainties rest upon the analysis of material forms whose essence you persistently ignore.

“ There is a Higher Knowledge of which, too late, some men obtain a glimpse, though they dare not avow it. Such men comprehend the necessity of considering substances not merely in their mathematical properties but also in their entirety, in their occult relations and affinities. The greatest man among you divined, in his latter days, that all was reciprocally cause and effect ;

that the visible worlds were co-ordinated among themselves and subject to worlds invisible. He groaned at the recollection of having tried to establish fixed precepts. Counting up his worlds, like grape-seeds scattered through ether, he had explained their coherence by the laws of planetary and molecular attraction. You bowed before that man of science — well ! I tell you that he died in despair. By supposing that the centrifugal and centripetal forces, which he had invented to explain to himself the universe, were equal, he stopped the universe ; yet he admitted motion in an indeterminate sense ; but supposing those forces unequal, then utter confusion of the planetary system ensued. His laws therefore were not absolute ; some higher problem existed than the principle on which his false glory rested. The connection of the stars with one another and the centripetal action of their internal motion did not deter him from seeking the parent stalk on which his clusters hung. Alas, poor man ! the more he widened space the heavier his burden grew. He told you how there came to be equilibrium among the parts, but whither went the whole ? His mind contemplated the vast extent, illimitable to human eyes, filled with those groups of worlds a mere fraction of which is all our telescopes can reach, but whose immensity is revealed by the rapidity of light. This sublime contemplation enabled him to perceive myriads of worlds, planted in space like flowers in a field, which are born like infants, grow like men, die as the aged die, and live by assimilating from their atmosphere the substances suitable for their nourish-

ment, — having a centre and a principal of life, guaranteeing to each other their circuits, absorbed and absorbing like plants, and forming a vast Whole endowed with life and possessing a destiny.

“At that sight your man of science trembled! He knew that life is produced by the union of the thing and its principle, that death or inertia or gravity is produced by a rupture between a thing and the movement which appertains to it. Then it was that he foresaw the crumbling of the worlds and their destruction if God should withdraw the Breath of his Word. He searched the Apocalypse for the traces of that Word. You thought him mad. Understand him better! He was seeking pardon for the work of his genius.

“Wilfrid, you have come here hoping to make me solve equations, or rise upon a rain-cloud, or plunge into the fiord and reappear a swan. If science or miracles were the end and object of humanity, Moses would have bequeathed to you the law of fluxions; Jesus Christ would have lightened the darkness of your sciences; his apostles would have told you whence come those vast trains of gas and melted metals, attached to cores which revolve and solidify as they dart through ether, or violently enter some system and combine with a star, jostling and displacing it by the shock, or destroying it by the infiltration of their deadly gases; Saint Paul, instead of telling you to live in God, would have explained why food is the secret bond among all creations and the evident tie between all living Species. In these days the greatest miracle of all would be the discovery

of the squaring of the circle, — a problem which you hold to be insoluble, but which is doubtless solved in the march of worlds by the intersection of some mathematical lines whose course is visible to the eye of spirits who have reached the higher spheres. Believe me, miracles are in us, not without us. Here natural facts occur which men call supernatural. God would have been strangely unjust had he confined the testimony of his power to certain generations and peoples and denied them to others. The brazen rod belongs to all. Neither Moses, nor Jacob, nor Zoroaster, nor Paul, nor Pythagoras, nor Swedenborg, not the humblest Messenger nor the loftiest Prophet of the Most High are greater than you are capable of being. Only, there come to nations as to men certain periods when Faith is theirs.

“If material science be the end and object of human effort, tell me, both of you, would societies, — those great centres where men congregate, — would they perpetually be dispersed? If civilization were the object of our Species, would intelligence perish? would it continue purely individual? The grandeur of all nations that were truly great was based on exceptions; when the exception ceased their power died. If such were the End-all, Prophets, Seers, and Messengers of God would have lent their hand to Science rather than have given it to Belief. Surely they would have quickened your brains sooner than have touched your hearts! But no; one and all they came to lead the nations back to God; they proclaimed the sacred Path in simple words that showed the way to heaven; all were wrapped

in love and faith, all were inspired by that WORD which hovers above the inhabitants of earth, enfolding them, inspiriting them, uplifting them; none were prompted by any human interest. Your great geniuses, your poets, your kings, your learned men are engulfed with their cities; while the names of these good pastors of humanity, ever blessed, have survived all cataclysms.

“Alas! we cannot understand each other on any point. We are separated by an abyss. You are on the side of darkness, while I—I live in the light, the true Light! Is this the word that you ask of me? I say it with joy; it may change you. Know this: there are sciences of matter and sciences of spirit. There, where you see substances, I see forces that stretch one toward another with generating power. To me, the character of bodies is the indication of their principles and the sign of their properties. Those principles beget affinities which escape your knowledge, and which are linked to centres. The different species among which life is distributed are unfailing streams which correspond unfailingly among themselves. Each has his own vocation. Man is effect and cause. He is fed, but he feeds in his turn. When you call God a Creator, you dwarf Him. He did not create, as you think He did, plants or animals or stars. Could He proceed by a variety of means? Must He not act by unity of composition? Moreover, He gave forth principles to be developed, according to His universal law, at the will of the surroundings in which they were placed. Hence a single substance and motion, a single plant, a single

animal, but correlations everywhere. In fact, all affinities are linked together by contiguous similitudes; the life of the worlds is drawn toward the centres by famished aspiration, as you are drawn by hunger to seek food.

“ To give you an example of affinities linked to similitudes (a secondary law on which the creations of your thought are based), music, that celestial art, is the working out of this principle; for is it not a complement of sounds harmonized by number? Is not sound a modification of air, compressed, dilated, echoed? You know the composition of air, — oxygen, nitrogen, and carbon. As you cannot obtain sound from the void, it is plain that music and the human voice are the result of organized chemical substances, which put themselves in unison with the same substances prepared within you by your thought, co-ordinated by means of light, the great nourisher of your globe. Have you ever meditated on the masses of nitre deposited by the snow, have you ever observed a thunderstorm and seen the plants breathing in from the air about them the metal it contains, without concluding that the sun has fused and distributed the subtle essence which nourishes all things here below? Swedenborg has said, ‘ The earth is a man.’

“ Your Science, which makes you great in your own eyes, is paltry indeed beside the light which bathes a Seer. Cease, cease to question me; our languages are different. For a moment I have used yours to cast, if it be possible, a ray of faith into your soul: to give

you, as it were, the hem of my garment and draw you up into the regions of Prayer. Can God abase Himself to you? Is it not for you to rise to Him? If human reason finds the ladder of its own strength too weak to bring God down to it, is it not evident that you must find some other path to reach Him? That Path is in ourselves. The Seer and the Believer find eyes within their souls more piercing far than eyes that probe the things of earth, — they see the Dawn. Hear this truth: Your science, let it be never so exact, your meditations, however bold, your noblest lights are Clouds. Above, above is the Sanctuary whence the true Light flows.”

She sat down and remained silent; her calm face bore no sign of the agitation which orators betray after their least fervid improvisations.

Wilfrid bent toward Monsieur Becker and said in a low voice, “Who taught her that?”

“I do not know,” he answered.

“He was gentler on the Falberg,” Minna whispered to herself.

Seraphita passed her hand across her eyes and then said, smiling: —

“You are very thoughtful to-night, gentlemen. You treat Minna and me as though we were men to whom you must talk politics or commerce; whereas we are young girls, and you ought to tell us tales while you drink your tea. That is what we do, Monsieur Wilfrid, in our long Norwegian evenings. Come, dear pastor, tell me some Saga that I have not heard, — that of

Frithiof, the chronicle that you believe and have so often promised me. Tell us the story of the peasant lad who owned the ship that talked and had a soul. Come! I dream of the frigate *Ellida*, the fairy with the sails young girls should navigate!"

"Since we have returned to the regions of *Jarvis*," said Wilfrid, whose eyes were fastened on *Seraphita* as those of a robber, lurking in the darkness, fasten on the spot where he knows the jewels lie, "tell me why you do not marry?"

"You are all born widows and widowers," she replied; "but my marriage was arranged at my birth. I am betrothed."

"To whom?" they cried.

"Ask not my secret," she said; "I will promise, if our father permits it, to invite you to these mysterious nuptials."

"Will they be soon?"

"I think so."

A long silence followed these words.

"The spring has come!" said *Seraphita*, suddenly. "The noise of the waters and the breaking of the ice begins. Come, let us welome the first spring of the new century."

She rose, followed by Wilfrid, and together they went to a window which David had opened. After the long silence of winter, the waters stirred beneath the ice and resounded through the fiord like music,—for there are sounds which space refines, so that they reach the ear in waves of light and freshness.

“Wilfrid, cease to nourish evil thoughts whose triumph would be hard to bear. Your desires are easily read in the fire of your eyes. Be kind; take one step forward in well-doing. Advance beyond the love of man and sacrifice yourself completely to the happiness of her you love. Obey me; I will lead you in a path where you shall obtain the distinctions which you crave, and where Love is infinite indeed.”

She left him thoughtful.

“That soft creature!” he said within himself; “is she indeed the prophetess whose eyes have just flashed lightnings, whose voice has rung through worlds, whose hand has wielded the axe of doubt against our sciences? Have we been dreaming? Am I awake?”

“Minna,” said Seraphitus, returning to the young girl, “the eagle swoops where the carrion lies, but the dove seeks the mountain spring beneath the peaceful greenery of the glades. The eagle soars to heaven, the dove descends from it. Cease to venture into regions where thou canst find no spring of waters, no umbrageous shade. If on the Falberg thou couldst not gaze into the abyss and live, keep all thy strength for him who will love thee. Go, poor girl; thou knowest, I am betrothed.”

Minna rose and followed Seraphitus to the window where Wilfrid stood. All three listened to the Sieg bounding under the rush of the upper waters, which brought down trees uprooted by the ice; the fiord had regained its voice; all illusions were dispelled! They rejoiced in Nature as she burst her bonds and seemed

to answer with sublime accord to the Spirit whose breath had wakened her.

When the three guests of this mysterious being left the house, they were filled with the vague sensation which is neither sleep, nor torpor, nor astonishment, but partakes of the nature of each, — a state that is neither dusk nor dawn, but which creates a thirst for light. All three were thinking.

“I begin to believe that she is indeed a Spirit hidden in human form,” said Monsieur Becker.

Wilfrid, re-entering his own apartments, calm and convinced, was unable to struggle against that influence so divinely majestic.

Minna said in her heart, “Why will he not let me love him!”

V.

FAREWELL.

THERE is in man an almost hopeless phenomenon for thoughtful minds who seek a meaning in the march of civilization, and who endeavor to give laws of progression to the movement of intelligence. However portentous a fact may be, or even supernatural, — if such facts exist, — however solemnly a miracle may be done in sight of all, the lightning of that fact, the thunderbolt of that miracle is quickly swallowed up in the ocean of life, whose surface, scarcely stirred by the brief convulsion, returns to the level of its habitual flow.

A Voice is heard from the jaws of an Animal; a Hand writes on the wall before a feasting Court; an Eye gleams in the slumber of a king, and a Prophet explains the dream; Death, evoked, rises on the confines of the luminous sphere where faculties revive; Spirit annihilates Matter at the foot of that mystic ladder of the Seven Spiritual Worlds, one resting upon another in space and revealing themselves in shining waves that break in light upon the steps of the celestial Tabernacle. But however solemn the inward Revelation, however clear the visible outward Sign, be sure that on the morrow Balaam doubts both him-

self and his ass, Belshazzar and Pharoah call Moses and Daniel to qualify the Word. The Spirit, descending, bears man above this earth, opens the seas and lets him see their depths, shows him lost species, wakens dry bones whose dust is the soil of valleys; the Apostle writes the Apocalypse, and twenty centuries later human science ratifies his words and turns his visions into maxims. And what comes of it all? Why this, — that the peoples live as they have ever lived, as they lived in the first Olympiad, as they lived on the morrow of Creation, and on the eve of the great cataclysm. The waves of Doubt have covered all things. The same floods surge with the same measured motion on the human granite which serves as a boundary to the ocean of intelligence. When man has inquired of himself whether he has seen that which he has seen, whether he has heard the words that entered his ears, whether the facts were facts and the idea is indeed an idea, then he resumes his wonted bearing, thinks of his worldly interests, obeys some envoy of death and of oblivion whose dusky mantle covers like a pall an ancient Humanity of which the moderns retain no memory. Man never pauses; he goes his round, he vegetates until the appointed day when his Axe falls. If this wave force, this pressure of bitter waters prevents all progress, no doubt it also warns of death. Spirits prepared by faith among the higher souls of earth can alone perceive the mystic ladder of Jacob.

After listening to Seraphita's answer in which (being

earnestly questioned) she unrolled before their eyes a Divine Perspective, — as an organ fills a church with sonorous sound and reveals a musical universe, its solemn tones rising to the loftiest arches and playing, like light, upon their foliated capitals, — Wilfrid returned to his own room, awed by the sight of a world in ruins, and on those ruins the brilliance of mysterious lights poured forth in torrents by the hand of a young girl. On the morrow he still thought of these things, but his awe was gone; he felt he was neither destroyed nor changed; his passions, his ideas awoke in full force, fresh and vigorous. He went to breakfast with Monsieur Becker and found the old man absorbed in the “Treatise on Incantations,” which he had searched since early morning to convince his guest that there was nothing unprecedented in all that they had seen and heard at the Swedish castle. With the childlike trustfulness of a true scholar he had folded down the pages in which Jean Wier related authentic facts which proved the possibility of the events that had happened the night before, — for to learned men an idea is an event, just as the greatest events often present no idea at all to them. By the time they had swallowed their fifth cup of tea, these philosophers had come to think the mysterious scene of the preceding evening wholly natural. The celestial truths to which they had listened were arguments susceptible of examination; Seraphita was a girl, more or less eloquent; allowance must be made for the charms of her voice, her seductive beauty, her fascinating motions, in short, for all those oratorical

arts by which an actor puts a world of sentiment and thought into phrases which are often commonplace.

“Bah!” said the worthy pastor, making a philosophical grimace as he spread a layer of salt butter on his slice of bread, “the final word of all these fine enigmas is six feet under ground.”

“But,” said Wilfrid, sugaring his tea, “I cannot imagine how a young girl of seventeen can know so much; what she said was certainly a compact argument.”

“Read the account of that Italian woman,” said Monsieur Becker, “who at the age of twelve spoke forty-two languages, ancient and modern; also the history of that monk who could guess thought by smell. I can give you a thousand such cases from Jean Wier and other writers.”

“I admit all that, dear pastor; but to my thinking, Seraphita would make a perfect wife.”

“She is all mind,” said Monsieur Becker, dubiously.

Several days went by, during which the snow in the valleys melted gradually away; the green of the forests and of the grass began to show; Norwegian Nature made ready her wedding garments for her brief bridal of a day. During this period, when the softened air invited every one to leave the house, Seraphita remained at home in solitude. When at last she admitted Minna, the latter saw at once the ravages of inward fever; Seraphita’s voice was hollow, her skin pallid; hitherto a poet might have compared her lustre to that of diamonds, — now it was that of a topaz.

“Have you seen her?” asked Wilfrid, who had wandered around the Swedish dwelling waiting for Minna’s return.

“Yes,” answered the young girl, weeping; “We must lose him!”

“Mademoiselle,” cried Wilfrid, endeavoring to repress the loud tones of his angry voice, “do not jest with me. You can love Seraphita only as one young girl can love another, and not with the love which she inspires in me. You do not know your danger if my jealousy were really aroused. Why can I not go to her? Is it you who stand in my way?”

“I do not know by what right you probe my heart,” said Minna, calm in appearance, but inwardly terrified. “Yes, I love him,” she said recovering the courage of her convictions, that she might, for once, confess the religion of her heart. “But my jealousy, natural as it is in love, fears no one here below. Alas! I am jealous of a secret feeling which absorbs him. Between him and me there is a great gulf fixed which I cannot cross. Would that I knew who loves him best, the stars or I! which of us would sacrifice our being most eagerly for his happiness! Why should I not be free to avow my love? In the presence of death we may declare our feelings, — and Seraphitus is about to die.”

“Minna, you are mistaken; the siren I so love and long for, she, whom I have seen, feeble and languid, on her couch of furs, is not a young man.”

“Monsieur,” answered Minna, distressfully, “the being whose powerful hand guided me on the Falberg,

who led me to the sæter sheltered beneath the Ice-Cap, there —" she said, pointing to the peak, "is not a feeble girl. Ah, had you but heard him prophesying! His poem was the music of thought. A young girl never uttered those solemn tones of a voice which stirred my soul."

"What certainty have you?" said Wilfrid.

"None but that of the heart," answered Minna.

"And I," cried Wilfrid, casting on his companion the terrible glance of the earthly desire that kills, "I, too, know how powerful is her empire over me, and I will undeceive you."

At this moment, while the words were rushing from Wilfrid's lips as rapidly as the thoughts surged in his brain, they saw Seraphita coming towards them from the house, followed by David. The apparition calmed the man's excitement.

"Look," he said, "could any but a woman move with that grace and languor?"

"He suffers; he comes forth for the last time," said Minna.

David went back at a sign from his mistress, who advanced towards Wilfrid and Minna.

"Let us go to the falls of the Sieg," she said, expressing one of those desires which suddenly possess the sick and which the well hasten to obey.

A thin white mist covered the valleys around the ford and the sides of the mountains, whose icy summits, sparkling like stars, pierced the vapor and gave it the appearance of a moving milky way. The sun

was visible through the haze like a globe of red fire. Though winter still fingered, puffs of warm air laden with the scent of the birch-trees, already adorned with their rosy efflorescence, and of the larches, whose silken tassels were beginning to appear, — breezes tempered by the incense and the sighs of earth, — gave token of the glorious Northern spring, the rapid, fleeting joy of that most melancholy of Natures. The wind was beginning to lift the veil of mist which half-obsured the gulf. The birds sang. The bark of the trees where the sun had not yet dried the clinging hoar-frost shone gayly to the eye in its fantastic wreathings which trickled away in murmuring rivulets as the warmth reached them. The three friends walked in silence along the shore. Wilfrid and Minna alone noticed the magic transformation that was taking place in the monotonous picture of the winter landscape. Their companion walked in thought, as though a voice were sounding to her ears in this concert of Nature.

Presently they reached the ledge of rocks through which the Sieg had forced its way, after escaping from the long avenue cut by its waters in an undulating line through the forest, — a fluvial pathway flanked by aged firs and roofed with strong-ribbed arches like those of a cathedral. Looking back from that vantage-ground, the whole extent of the fiord could be seen at a glance, with the open sea sparkling on the horizon beyond it like a burnished blade.

At this moment the mist, rolling away, left the sky blue and clear. Among the valleys and around the

trees flitted the shining fragments, — a diamond dust swept by the freshening breeze. The torrent rolled on toward them ; along its length a vapor rose, tinted by the sun with every color of his light ; the decomposing rays flashing prismatic fires along the many-tinted scarf of waters. The rugged ledge on which they stood was carpeted by several kinds of lichen, forming a noble mat variegated by moisture and lustrous like the sheen of a silken fabric. Shrubs, already in bloom, crowned the rocks with garlands. Their waving foliage, eager for the freshness of the water, drooped its tresses above the stream ; the larches shook their light fringes and played with the pines, stiff and motionless as aged men. This luxuriant beauty was foiled by the solemn colonnades of the forest-trees, rising in terraces upon the mountains, and by the calm sheet of the fiord, lying below, where the torrent buried its fury and was still. Beyond, the sea hemmed in this page of Nature, written by the greatest of poets, Chance ; to whom the wild luxuriance of creation when apparently abandoned to itself is owing.

The village of Jarvis was a lost point in the landscape, in this immensity of Nature, sublime at this moment like all things else of ephemeral life which present a fleeting image of perfection ; for, by a law fatal to no eyes but our own, creations which appear complete — the love of our heart and the desire of our eyes — have but one spring-tide here below. Standing on this breast-work of rock these three persons might well suppose themselves alone in the universe.

“What beauty!” cried Wilfrid.

“Nature sings hymns,” said Seraphita. “Is not her music exquisite? Tell me, Wilfrid, could any of the women you once knew create such a glorious retreat for herself as this? I am conscious here of a feeling seldom inspired by the sight of cities, a longing to lie down amid this quickening verdure. Here, with eyes to heaven and an open heart, lost in the bosom of immensity, I could hear the sighing of the flower, scarce budded, which longs for wings, or the cry of the eider grieving that it can only fly, and remember the desires of man who, issuing from all, is none the less ever longing. But that, Wilfrid, is only a woman’s thought. You find seductive fancies in the wreathing mists, the light embroidered veils which Nature dons like a coy maiden, in this atmosphere where she perfumes for her spousals the greenery of her tresses. You seek the naiad’s form amid the gauzy vapors, and to your thinking my ears should listen only to the virile voice of the Torrent.”

“But Love is there, like the bee in the calyx of the flower,” replied Wilfrid, perceiving for the first time a trace of earthly sentiment in her words, and fancying the moment favorable for an expression of his passionate tenderness.

“Always there?” said Seraphita, smiling. Minna had left them for a moment to gather the blue saxifrages growing on a rock above.

“Always,” repeated Wilfrid. “Hear me,” he said, with a masterful glance which was foiled as by a dia-

mond breast-plate. "You know not what I am, nor what I can be, nor what I will. Do not reject my last entreaty. Be mine for the good of that world whose happiness you bear upon your heart. Be mine that my conscience may be pure; that a voice divine may sound in my ears and infuse Good into the great enterprise I have undertaken prompted by my hatred to the nations, but which I swear to accomplish for their benefit if you will walk beside me. What higher mission can you ask for love? what nobler part can woman aspire to? I came to Norway to meditate a great design."

"And you will sacrifice its grandeur," she said, "to an innocent girl who loves you, and who will lead you in the paths of peace."

"What matters sacrifice," he cried, "if I have you? Hear my secret. I have gone from end to end of the North, — that great smithy from whose anvils new races have spread over the earth, like human tides appointed to refresh the wornout civilizations. I wished to begin my work at some Northern point, to win the empire which force and intellect must ever give over a primitive people; to form that people for battle, to drive them to wars which should ravage Europe like a conflagration, crying liberty to some, pillage to others, glory here, pleasure there! — I, myself, remaining an image of Destiny, cruel, implacable, advancing like the whirlwind, which sucks from the atmosphere the particles that make the thunderbolt, and falls like a devouring scourge upon the nations. Europe is at an epoch when she awaits the new Messiah who shall de-

stroy society and remake it. She can no longer believe except in him who crushes her under foot. The day is at hand when poets and historians will justify me, exalt me, and borrow my ideas, mine! And all the while my triumph will be a jest, written in blood, the jest of my vengeance! But not here, Seraphita; what I see of the North disgusts me. Hers is a mere blind force; I thirst for the Indies! I would rather fight a selfish, cowardly, mercantile government. Besides, it is easier to stir the imagination of the peoples at the feet of the Caucasus than to argue with the intellect of the icy lands which here surround me. Therefore am I tempted to cross the Russian steppes and pour my triumphant human tide through Asia to the Ganges, and overthrow the British rule. Seven men have done this thing before me in other epochs of the world. I will emulate them. I will spread Art like the Saracens, hurled by Mohammed upon Europe. Mine shall be no paltry sovereignty like those that govern to-day the ancient provinces of the Roman empire, disputing with their subjects about a customs right! No, nothing can bar my way! Like Genghis Khan, my feet shall tread a third of the globe, my hand shall grasp the throat of Asia like Aurung-Zeb. Be my companion! Let me seat thee, beautiful and noble being, on a throne! I do not doubt success, but live within my heart and I am sure of it."

"I have already reigned," said Seraphita, coldly.

The words fell as the axe of a skilful woodman falls at the root of a young tree and brings it down at a

single blow. Men alone can comprehend the rage that a woman excites in the soul of a man when, after showing her his strength, his power, his wisdom, his superiority, the capricious creature bends her head and says, "All that is nothing;" when, unmoved, she smiles and says, "Such things are known to me," as though his power were nought.

"What!" cried Wilfrid, in despair, "can the riches of art, the riches of worlds, the splendors of a court —"

She stopped him by a single inflexion of her lips, and said, "Beings more powerful than you have offered me far more."

"Thou hast no soul," he cried, — "no soul, if thou art not persuaded by the thought of comforting a great man, who is willing now to sacrifice all things to live beside thee in a little house on the shores of a lake,"

"But," she said, "I am loved with a boundless love."

"By whom?" cried Wilfrid, approaching Seraphita with a frenzied movement, as if to fling her into the foaming basin of the Sieg.

She looked at him and slowly extended her arm, pointing to Minna, who now sprang towards her, fair and glowing and lovely as the flowers she held in her hand.

"Child!" said Seraphitus, advancing to meet her.

Wilfrid remained where she left him, motionless as the rock on which he stood, lost in thought, longing to let himself go into the torrent of the Sieg, like the fallen trees which hurried past his eyes and disappeared in the bosom of the gulf.

"I gathered them for you," said Minna, offering the

bunch of saxifrages to the being she adored. "One of them, see, this one," she added, selecting a flower, "is like that you found on the Falberg."

Seraphitus looked alternately at the flower and at Minna.

"Why question me? Dost thou doubt me?"

"No," said the young girl, "my trust in you is infinite. You are more beautiful to look upon than this glorious nature, but your mind surpasses in intellect that of all humanity. When I have been with you I seem to have prayed to God. I long —"

"For what?" said Seraphitus, with a glance that revealed to the young girl the vast distance which separated them.

"To suffer in your stead."

"Ah, dangerous being!" cried Seraphitus in his heart. "Is it wrong, oh my God! to desire to offer her to Thee? Dost thou remember, Minna, what I said to thee up there?" he added, pointing to the summit of the Ice-Cap.

"He is terrible again," thought Minna, trembling with fear.

The voice of the Sieg accompanied the thoughts of the three beings united on this platform of projecting rock, but separated in soul by the abysses of the Spiritual World.

"Seraphitus! teach me," said Minna in a silvery voice, soft as the motion of a sensitive plant, "teach me how to cease to love you. Who could fail to admire you; love is an admiration that never wearies."

“Poor child!” said Seraphitus, turning pale; “there is but one whom thou canst love in that way.”

“Who?” asked Minna.

“Thou shalt know hereafter,” he said, in the feeble voice of a man who lies down to die.

“Help, help! he is dying!” cried Minna.

Wilfrid ran towards them. Seeing Seraphita as she lay on a fragment of gneiss, where time had cast its velvety mantle of lustrous lichen and tawny mosses now burnished in the sunlight, he whispered softly, “How beautiful she is!”

“One other look! the last that I shall ever cast upon this nature in travail,” said Seraphita, rallying her strength and rising to her feet.

She advanced to the edge of the rocky platform, whence her eyes took in the scenery of that grand and glorious landscape, so verdant, flowery, and animated, yet so lately buried in its winding-sheet of snow.

“Farewell,” she said, “farewell, home of Earth, warmed by the fires of Love; where all things press with ardent force from the centre to the extremities; where the extremities are gathered up, like a woman’s hair, to weave the mysterious braid which binds us in that invisible ether to the Thought Divine!

“Behold the man bending above that furrow moistened with his tears, who lifts his head for an instant to question Heaven; behold the woman gathering her children that she may feed them with her milk; see him who lashes the ropes in the height of the gale; see her who sits in the hollow of the rocks, awaiting the

father! Behold all they who stretch their hands in want after a lifetime spent in thankless toil. To all peace and courage, and to all farewell!

“Hear you the cry of the soldier, dying nameless and unknown? the wail of the man deceived who weeps in the desert? To them peace and courage; to all farewell!

“Farewell, you who die for the kings of the earth! Farewell, ye people without a country and ye countries without a people, each with a mutual want. Above all, farewell to Thee who knew not where to lay Thy head, Exile divine! Farewell, mothers beside your dying sons! Farewell, ye Little Ones, ye Feeble, ye Suffering, you whose sorrows I have so often borne! Farewell, all ye who have descended into the sphere of Instinct that you may suffer there for others!

“Farewell, ye mariners who seek the Orient through the thick darkness of your abstractions, vast as principles! Farewell, martyrs of thought, led by thought into the presence of the True Light. Farewell, regions of study where mine ears can hear the plaint of genius neglected and insulted, the sigh of the patient scholar to whom enlightenment comes too late!

“I see the angelic choir, the wafting of perfumes, the incense of the heart of those who go their way consoling, praying, imparting celestial balm and living light to suffering souls! Courage, ye choir of Love! you to whom the peoples cry, ‘Comfort us, comfort us, defend us!’ To you courage! and farewell!

“Farewell, ye granite rocks that shall bloom a flower;

farewell, flower that becomes a dove ; farewell, dove that shalt be woman ; farewell, woman, who art Suffering, man, who art Belief ! Farewell, you who shall be all love, all prayer ! ”

Broken with fatigue, this inexplicable being leaned for the first time on Wilfrid and on Minna to be taken home. Wilfrid and Minna felt the shock of a mysterious contact in and through the being who thus connected them. They had scarcely advanced a few steps when David met them, weeping. “ She will die,” he said, “ why have you brought her hither ? ”

The old man raised her in his arms with the vigor of youth and bore her to the gate of the Swedish castle like an eagle bearing a white lamb to his mountain eyrie.

VI.

THE PATH TO HEAVEN.

THE day succeeding that on which Seraphita foresaw her death and bade farewell to Earth, as a prisoner looks round his dungeon before leaving it forever, she suffered pains which obliged her to remain in the helpless immobility of those whose pangs are great. Wilfrid and Minna went to see her, and found her lying on her couch of furs. Still veiled in flesh, her soul shone through that veil, which grew more and more transparent day by day. The progress of the Spirit, piercing the last obstacle between itself and the Infinite, was called an illness, the hour of Life went by the name of death. David wept as he watched her sufferings; unreasonable as a child, he would not listen to his mistress's consolations. Monsieur Becker wished Seraphita to try remedies; but all were useless.

One morning she sent for the two beings whom she loved, telling them that this would be the last of her bad days. Wilfrid and Minna came in terror, knowing well that they were about to lose her. Seraphita smiled to them as one departing to a better world; her head drooped like a flower heavy with dew, which opens its calyx for the last time to waft its fragrance on the breeze. She looked at these friends with a sadness

that was for them, not for herself; she thought no longer of herself, and they felt this with a grief mingled with gratitude which they were unable to express. Wilfrid stood silent and motionless, lost in thoughts excited by events whose vast bearings enabled him to conceive of some illimitable immensity.

Emboldened by the weakness of the being lately so powerful, or perhaps by the fear of losing him forever, Minna bent down over the couch and said, "Seraphitus, let me follow thee!"

"Can I forbid thee?"

"Why will thou not love me enough to stay with me?"

"I can love nothing here."

"What canst thou love?"

"Heaven."

"Is it worthy of heaven to despise the creatures of God?"

"Minna, can we love two beings at once? Would our beloved be indeed our beloved if he did not fill our hearts? Must he not be the first, the last, the only one? She who is all love, must she not leave the world for her beloved? Human ties are but a memory, she has no ties except to him! Her soul is hers no longer; it is his. If she keeps within her soul anything that is not his, does she love? No, she loves not. To love feebly, is that to love at all? The voice of her beloved makes her joyful; it flows through her veins in a crimson tide more glowing far than blood; his glance is the light that penetrates her; her being

melts into his being. He is warm to her soul. He is the light that lightens; near to him there is neither cold nor darkness. He is never absent, he is always with us; we think in him, to him, by him! Minna, that is how I love him."

"Love whom?" said Minna, tortured with sudden jealousy.

"God," replied Seraphitus, his voice glowing in their souls like fires of liberty lighted from peak to peak upon the mountains, — "God, who does not betray us! God, who will never abandon us! who crowns our wishes; who satisfies His creatures with joy — joy unalloyed and infinite! God, who never wearies but ever smiles! God, who pours into the soul fresh treasures day by day; who purifies and leaves no bitterness; who is all harmony, all flame! God, who has placed Himself within our hearts to blossom there; who hearkens to our prayers; who does not stand aloof when we are His, but gives His presence absolutely! He who revives us, magnifies us, and multiplies us in Himself; God! Minna, I love thee because thou mayst be His! I love thee because if thou come to Him thou wilt be mine."

"Lead me to Him," cried Minna, kneeling down; "take me by the hand; I will not leave thee!"

"Lead us, Seraphita!" cried Wilfrid, coming to Minna's side with an impetuous movement. "Yes, thou hast given me a thirst for Light, a thirst for the Word. I am parched with the Love thou hast put into my heart; I desire to keep thy soul in mine; thy will is mine; I will do whatsoever thou biddest me. Since I

cannot obtain thee, I will keep thy will and all the thoughts that thou hast given me. If I may not unite myself with thee except by the power of my spirit, I will cling to thee in soul as the flame to what it laps. Speak !”

“Angel !” exclaimed the mysterious being, enfolding them both in one glance, as it were with an azure mantle, “Heaven shall be thine heritage !”

Silence fell among them after these words, which sounded in the souls of the man and of the woman like the first notes of some celestial harmony.

“If you would teach your feet to tread the Path to heaven, know that the way is hard at first,” said the weary sufferer ; “God wills that you shall seek Him for Himself. In that sense, He is jealous ; He demands your whole self. But when you have given Him yourself, never, never will He abandon you. I leave with you the keys of the kingdom of His Light, where evermore you shall dwell in the bosom of the Father, in the heart of the Bridegroom. No sentinels guard the approaches ; you may enter where you will ; His palaces, His treasures, His sceptre, all are free. ‘Take them !’ He says. But—you must will to go there. Like one preparing for a journey, a man must leave his home, renounce his projects, bid farewell to friends, to father, mother, sister, even to the helpless brother who cries after him, — yes, farewell to them eternally ; you will no more return than did the martyrs on their way to the stake. You must strip yourself of every sentiment, of everything to which man clings. Unless you do this you are but half-hearted in your enterprise.

“ Do for God what you do for your ambitious projects, what you do in consecrating yourself to Art, what you have done when you loved a human creature or sought some secret of human science. Is not God the whole of science, the all of love, the source of poetry? Surely His riches are worthy of being coveted! His treasure is inexhaustible, His poem infinite, His love immutable, His science sure and darkened by no mysteries. Be anxious for nothing, He will give you all. Yes, in His heart are treasures with which the petty joys you lose on earth are not to be compared. What I tell you is true; you shall possess His power; you may use it as you would use the gifts of lover or mistress. Alas! men doubt, they lack faith, and will, and persistence. If some set their feet in the path, they look behind them and presently turn back. Few decide between the two extremes, — to go or stay, heaven or the mire. All hesitate. Weakness leads astray, passion allures into dangerous paths, vice becomes habitual, man flounders in the mud and makes no progress towards a better state.

“ All human beings go through a previous life in the sphere of Instinct, where they are brought to see the worthlessness of earthly treasures, to amass which they gave themselves such untold pains! Who can tell how many times the human being lives in the sphere of Instinct before he is prepared to enter the sphere of Abstractions, where thought expends itself on erring science, where mind wearies at last of human language? for, when Matter is exhausted, Spirit enters.

Who knows how many fleshly forms the heir of heaven occupies before he can be brought to understand the value of that silence and solitude whose starry plains are but the vestibule of Spiritual Worlds? He feels his way amid the void, makes trial of nothingness, and then at last his eyes revert upon the Path. Then follow other existences, — all to be lived to reach the place where Light effulgent shines. Death is the post-house of the journey. A lifetime may be needed merely to gain the virtues which annul the errors of man's preceding life. First comes the life of suffering, whose tortures create a thirst for love. Next the life of love and devotion to the creature, teaching devotion to the Creator, — a life where the virtues of love, its martyrdoms, its joys followed by sorrows, its angelic hopes, its patience, its resignation, excite an appetite for things divine. Then follows the life which seeks in silence the traces of the Word; in which the soul grows humble and charitable. Next the life of longing; and lastly, the life of prayer. In that is the noon-day sun; there are the flowers, there the harvest!

“The virtues we acquire, which develop slowly within us, are the invisible links that bind each one of our existences to the others, — existences which the spirit alone remembers, for Matter has no memory for spiritual things. Thought alone holds the tradition of the bygone life. The endless legacy of the past to the present is the secret source of human genius. Some receive the gift of form, some the gift of numbers, others the gift of harmony. All these gifts are steps of

progress in the Path of Light. Yes, he who possesses a single one of them touches at that point the Infinite. Earth has divided the Word — of which I here reveal some syllables — into particles, she has reduced it to dust and has scattered it through her works, her dogmas, her poems. If some impalpable grain shines like a diamond in a human work, men cry: ‘How grand! how true! how glorious!’ That fragment vibrates in their souls and wakes a presentiment of heaven: to some, a melody that weans from earth; to others, the solitude that draws to God. To all, whatsoever sends us back upon ourselves, whatsoever strikes us down and crushes us, lifts or abases us, — *that* is but a syllable of the Divine Word.

“When a human soul draws its first furrow straight, the rest will follow surely. One thought borne inward, one prayer uplifted, one suffering endured, one echo of the Word within us, and our souls are forever changed. All ends in God; and many are the ways to find Him by walking straight before us. When the happy day arrives in which you set your feet upon the Path and begin your pilgrimage, the world will know nothing of it; earth no longer understands you; you no longer understand each other. Men who attain to a knowledge of these things, who lisp a few syllables of the Word, often have not where to lay their head; hunted like beasts they perish on the scaffold, to the joy of assembled peoples, while Angels open to them the gates of heaven. Therefore, your destiny is a secret between yourself and God, just as love is a secret between two

hearts. You may be the buried treasure, trodden under the feet of men thirsting for gold yet all-unknowing that you are there beneath them.

“Henceforth your existence becomes a thing of ceaseless activity; each act has a meaning which connects you with God, just as in love your actions and your thoughts are filled with the loved one. But love and its joys, love and its pleasures limited by the senses, are but the imperfect image of the love which unites you to your celestial Spouse. All earthly joy is mixed with anguish, with discontent. If love ought not to pall then death should end it while its flame is high, so that we see no ashes. But in God our wretchedness becomes delight, joy lives upon itself and multiplies, and grows, and has no limit. In the Earthly life our fleeting love is ended by tribulation; in the Spiritual life the tribulations of a day end in joys unending. The soul is ceaselessly joyful. We feel God with us, in us; He gives a sacred savour to all things; He shines in the soul; He imparts to us His sweetness; He stills our interest in the world viewed for ourselves; He quickens our interest in it viewed for His sake, and grants us the exercise of His power upon it. In His name we do the works which He inspires, we act for Him, we have no self except in Him, we love His creatures with undying love, we dry their tears and long to bring them unto Him, as a loving woman longs to see the inhabitants of earth obey her well-beloved.

“The final life, the fruition of all other lives, to which the powers of the soul have tended, and whose

merits open the Sacred Portals to perfected man, is the life of Prayer. Who can make you comprehend the grandeur, the majesty, the might of Prayer? May my voice, these words of mine, ring in your hearts and change them. Be now, here, what you may be after cruel trial! There are privileged beings, Prophets, Seers, Messengers, and Martyrs, all those who suffer for the Word and who proclaim it; such souls spring at a bound across the human sphere and rise at once to Prayer. So, too, with those whose souls receive the fire of Faith. Be one of those brave souls! God welcomes boldness. He loves to be taken by violence; He will never reject those who force their way to Him. Know this! desire, the torrent of your will, is so all-powerful that a single emission of it, made with force, can obtain all; a single cry, uttered under the pressure of Faith, suffices. Be one of such beings, full of force, of will, of love! Be conquerors on the earth! Let the hunger and thirst of God possess you. Fly to Him as the hart panting for the water-brooks. Desire shall lend you its wings; tears, those blossoms of repentance, shall be the celestial baptism from which your nature will issue purified. Cast yourself on the breast of the stream in Prayer! Silence and meditation are the means of following the Way. God reveals Himself, unfailingly, to the solitary, thoughtful seeker.

“It is thus that the separation takes place between Matter, which so long has wrapped its darkness round you, and Spirit, which was in you from the beginning,

the light which lighted you and now brings noon-day to your soul. Yes, your broken heart shall receive the light; the light shall bathe it. Then you will no longer feel convictions, they will have changed to certainties. The Poet utters; the Thinker meditates; the Righteous acts; but he who stands upon the borders of the Divine World prays; and his prayer is word, thought, action, in one! Yes, prayer includes all, contains all; it completes nature, for it reveals to you the mind within it and its progression. White and shining virgin of all human virtues, ark of the covenant between earth and heaven, tender and strong companion partaking of the lion and of the lamb, Prayer! Prayer will give you the key of heaven! Bold and pure as innocence, strong, like all that is single and simple, this glorious, invincible Queen rests, nevertheless, on the material world; she takes possession of it; like the sun, she clasps it in a circle of light. The universe belongs to him who wills, who knows, who prays; but he must will, he must know, he must pray; in a word, he must possess force, wisdom, and faith.

“Therefore Prayer, issuing from so many trials, is the consummation of all truths, all powers, all feelings. Fruit of the laborious, progressive, continued development of natural properties and faculties vitalized anew by the divine breath of the Word, Prayer has occult activity; it is the final worship — not the material worship of images, nor the spiritual worship of formulas, but the worship of the Divine World. We say no prayers, — prayer forms within us; it is a

faculty which acts of itself; it has attained a way of action which lifts it outside of forms; it links the soul to God, with whom we unite as the root of the tree unites with the soil; our veins draw life from the principle of life, and we live by the life of the universe. Prayer bestows external conviction by making us penetrate the Material World through the cohesion of all our faculties with the elementary substances; it bestows internal conviction by developing our essence and mingling it with that of the Spiritual Worlds. To be able to pray thus, you must attain to an utter abandonment of flesh; you must acquire through the fires of the furnace the purity of the diamond; for this complete communion with the Divine is obtained only in absolute repose, where storms and conflicts are at rest.

“Yes, Prayer — the aspiration of the soul freed absolutely from the body — bears all forces within it, and applies them to the constant and perseverant union of the Visible and the Invisible. When you possess the faculty of praying without weariness, with love, with force, with certainty, with intelligence, your spiritualized nature will presently be invested with power. Like a rushing wind, like a thunderbolt, it cuts its way through all things and shares the power of God. The quickness of the Spirit becomes yours; in an instant you may pass from region to region; like the Word itself, you are transported from the ends of the world to other worlds. Harmony exists, and you are part of it! Light is there and your eyes possess it! Melody is heard and you echo it! Under such con-

ditions, you feel your perceptions developing, widening ; the eyes of your mind reach to vast distances. There is, in truth, neither time nor place to the Spirit ; space and duration are proportions created for Matter ; spirit and matter have naught in common.

“ Though these things take place in stillness, in silence, without agitation, without external movement, yet Prayer is all action ; but it is spiritual action, stripped of substantiality, and reduced, like the motion of the worlds, to an invisible pure force. It penetrates everywhere like light ; it gives vitality to souls that come beneath its rays, as Nature beneath the sun. It resuscitates virtue, purifies and sanctifies all actions, peoples solitude, and gives a foretaste of eternal joys. When you have once felt the delights of the divine intoxication which comes of this internal travail, then all is yours ! once take the lute on which we sing to God within your hands, and you will never part with it. Hence the solitude in which Angelic Spirits live ; hence their disdain of human joys. They are withdrawn from those who must die to live ; they hear the language of such beings, but they no longer understand their ideas ; they wonder at their movements, at what the world terms policies, material laws, societies. For them all mysteries are over ; truth, and truth alone, is theirs. They who have reached the point where their eyes discern the Sacred Portals, who, not looking back, not uttering one regret, contemplate worlds and comprehend their destinies, such as they keep silence, wait, and bear their final struggles. The worst of all

those struggles is the last; at the zenith of all virtue is Resignation, — to be an exile and not lament, no longer to delight in earthly things and yet to smile, to belong to God and yet to stay with men! You hear the voice that cries to you, ‘Advance!’ Often celestial visions of descending Angels compass you about with songs of praise; then, tearless, uncomplaining, must you watch them as they reascend the skies! To murmur is to forfeit all. Resignation is a fruit that ripens at the gates of heaven. How powerful, how glorious the calm smile, the pure brow of the resigned human creature. Radiant is the light of that brow. They who live in its atmosphere grow purer. That calm glance penetrates and softens. More eloquent by silence than the prophet by speech, such beings triumph by their simple presence. Their ears are quick to hear as a faithful dog listening for his master. Brighter than hope, stronger than love, higher than faith, that creature of resignation is the virgin standing on the earth, who holds for a moment the conquered palm, then, rising heavenward, leaves behind her the imprint of her white, pure feet. When she has passed away men flock around and cry, ‘See! See!’ Sometimes God holds her still in sight, — a figure to whose feet creep Forms and Species of Animality to be shown their way. She wafts the light exhaling from her hair, and they see; she speaks, and they hear. ‘A miracle!’ they cry. Often she triumphs in the name of God; frightened men deny her and put her to death; smiling, she lays down her sword and goes to the stake, having saved the

Peoples. How many a pardoned Angel has passed from martyrdom to heaven! Sinai, Golgotha are not in this place nor in that; Angels are crucified in every place, in every sphere. Sighs pierce to God from the whole universe. This earth on which we live is but a single sheaf of the great harvest; humanity is but a species in the vast garden where the flowers of heaven are cultivated. Everywhere God is like unto Himself, and everywhere, by prayer, it is easy to reach Him."

With these words, which fell from the lips of another Hagar in the wilderness, burning the souls of the hearers as the live coal of the word inflamed Isaiah, this mysterious being paused as though to gather some remaining strength. Wilfrid and Minna dared not speak. Suddenly HE lifted himself up to die: —

"Soul of all things, oh my God, thou whom I love for Thyself! Thou, Judge and Father, receive a love which has no limit. Give me of thine essence and thy faculties that I be wholly thine! Take me, that I no longer be myself! Am I not purified? then cast me back into the furnace! If I be not yet proved in the fire, make me some nurturing ploughshare, or the Sword of victory! Grant me a glorious martyrdom in which to proclaim thy Word! Rejected, I will bless thy justice. But if excess of love may win in a moment that which hard and patient labor cannot attain, then bear me upward in thy chariot of fire! Grant me triumph, or further trial, still will I bless thee! To suffer for thee, is not that to triumph? Take me, seize me, bear me away! nay, if thou wilt, reject me! Thou

art He who can do no evil. Ah!" he cried, after a pause, "the bonds are breaking."

"Spirits of the pure, ye sacred flock, come forth from the hidden places, come on the surface of the luminous waves! The hour now is; come, assemble! Let us sing at the gates of the Sanctuary; our songs shall drive away the final clouds. With one accord let us hail the Dawn of the Eternal Day. Behold the rising of the one True Light! Ah, why may I not take with me these my friends! Farewell, poor earth, Farewell!"

VII.

THE ASSUMPTION.

THE last psalm was uttered neither by word, look, nor gesture, nor by any of those signs which men employ to communicate their thoughts, but as the soul speaks to itself; for at the moment when Seraphita revealed herself in her true nature, her thoughts were no longer enslaved by human words. The violence of that last prayer had burst her bonds. Her soul, like a white dove, remained for an instant poised above the body whose exhausted substances were about to be annihilated.

The aspiration of the Soul toward heaven was so contagious that Wilfrid and Minna, beholding those radiant scintillations of Life, perceived not Death.

They had fallen on their knees when *he* had turned toward his Orient, and they shared his ecstasy.

The fear of the Lord, which creates man a second time, purging away his dross, mastered their hearts.

Their eyes, veiled to the things of Earth, were opened to the Brightness of Heaven.

Though, like the Seers of old called Prophets by men, they were filled with the terror of the Most High, yet like them they continued firm when they found themselves within the radiance where the Glory of the SPIRIT shone.

The veil of flesh, which, until now, had hidden that glory from their eyes, dissolved imperceptibly away, and left them free to behold the Divine substance.

They stood in the twilight of the Coming Dawn, whose feeble rays prepared them to look upon the True Light, to hear the Living Word, and yet not die.

In this state they began to perceive the immeasurable differences which separate the things of earth from the things of Heaven.

LIFE, on the borders of which they stood, leaning upon each other, trembling and illuminated, like two children standing under shelter in presence of a conflagration, That Life offered no lodgment to the senses.

The ideas they used to interpret their vision to themselves were to the things seen what the visible senses of a man are to his soul, the material covering of a divine essence.

The departing SPIRIT was above them, shedding incense without odor, melody without sound. About them, where they stood, were neither surfaces, nor angles, nor atmosphere.

They dared neither question him nor contemplate him; they stood in the shadow of that Presence as beneath the burning rays of a tropical sun, fearing to raise their eyes lest the light should blast them.

They knew they were beside him, without being able to perceive how it was that they stood, as in a dream, on the confines of the Visible and the Invisible, nor how they had lost sight of the Visible and how they beheld the Invisible.

To each other they said: "If he touch us, we can die!" But the SPIRIT was now within the Infinite, and they knew not that neither time, nor space, nor death, existed there, and that a great gulf lay between them, although they thought themselves beside him.

Their souls were not prepared to receive in its fullness a knowledge of the faculties of that Life; they could have only faint and confused perceptions of it, suited to their weakness.

Were it not so, the thunder of the LIVING WORD, whose far-off tones now reached their ears, and whose meaning entered their souls as life unites with body,—one echo of that Word would have consumed their being as a whirlwind of fire laps up a fragile straw.

Therefore they saw only that which their nature, sustained by the strength of the SPIRIT, permitted them to see; they heard that only which they were able to hear.

And yet, though thus protected, they shuddered when the Voice of the anguished soul broke forth above them—the prayer of the SPIRIT awaiting Life and imploring it with a cry.

That cry froze them to the very marrow of their bones.

The SPIRIT knocked at the SACRED PORTAL. "What wilt thou?" answered a CHOIR, whose question echoed among the worlds. "To go to God." "Hast thou conquered?" "I have conquered the flesh through abstinence, I have conquered false knowledge by humility, I have conquered pride by charity, I have conquered

the earth by love ; I have paid my dues by suffering, I am purified in the fires of faith, I have longed for Life by prayer : I wait in adoration, and I am resigned.”

No answer came.

“God’s will be done !” answered the SPIRIT, believing that he was about to be rejected.

His tears flowed and fell like dew upon the heads of the two kneeling witnesses, who trembled before the justice of God.

Suddenly the trumpets sounded,—the trumpets of Victory won by the ANGEL in this last trial. The reverberation passed through space as sound through its echo, filling it, and shaking the universe which Wilfrid and Minna felt like an atom beneath their feet. They trembled under an anguish caused by the dread of the mystery about to be accomplished.

A great movement took place, as though the Eternal Legions, putting themselves in motion, were passing upward in spiral columns. The worlds revolved like clouds driven by a furious wind. It was all rapid.

Suddenly the veils were rent away. They saw on high as it were a star, incomparably more lustrous than the most luminous of material stars, which detached itself, and fell like a thunderbolt, dazzling as lightning. Its passage paled the faces of the pair, who thought it to be THE LIGHT Itself.

It was the Messenger of good tidings, the plume of whose helmet was a flame of Life.

Behind him lay the swath of his way gleaming with a flood of the lights through which he passed.

He bore a palm and a sword. He touched the SPIRIT with the palm, and the SPIRIT was transfigured. Its white wings noiselessly unfolded.

This communication of THE LIGHT, changing the SPIRIT into a SERAPH and clothing it with a glorious form, a celestial armor, poured down such effulgent rays that the two Seers were paralyzed.

Like the three apostles to whom Jesus showed himself, they felt the dead weight of their bodies which denied them a complete and cloudless intuition of THE WORD and THE TRUE LIFE.

They comprehended the nakedness of their souls; they were able to measure the poverty of their light by comparing it—a humbling task—with the halo of the SERAPH.

A passionate desire to plunge back into the mire of earth and suffer trial took possession of them,—trial through which they might victoriously utter at the SACRED GATES the words of that radiant Seraph.

The Seraph knelt before the SANCTUARY, beholding it, at last, face to face; and he said, raising his hands thitherward, “Grant that these two may have further sight; they will love the Lord and proclaim His word.”

At this prayer a veil fell. Whether it were that the hidden force which held the Seers had momentarily annihilated their physical bodies, or that it raised their spirits above those bodies, certain it is that they felt within them a rending of the pure from the impure.

The tears of the Seraph rose about them like a vapor, which hid the lower worlds from their knowledge, held

them in its folds, bore them upward, gave them forgetfulness of earthly meanings and the power of comprehending the meanings of things divine.

The True Light shone; it illumined the Creations, which seemed to them barren when they saw the source from which all worlds — Terrestrial, Spiritual, and Divine — derived their Motion.

Each world possessed a centre to which converged all points of its circumference. These worlds were themselves the points which moved toward the centre of their system. Each system had its centre in great celestial regions which communicated with the flaming and quenchless *Motor of all that is*.

Thus, from the greatest to the smallest of the worlds, and from the smallest of the worlds to the smallest portion of the beings who compose it, all was individual, and all was, nevertheless, One and indivisible.

What was the design of the Being, fixed in His essence and in His faculties, who transmitted that essence and those faculties without losing them? who manifested them outside of Himself without separating them from Himself? who rendered his creations outside of Himself fixed in their essence and mutable in their form? The pair thus called to the celestial festival could only see the order and arrangement of created beings and admire the immediate result. The Angels alone see more. They know the means; they comprehend the final end.

But what the two Elect were granted power to contemplate, what they were able to bring back as a testi-

mony which enlightened their minds forever after, was the proof of the action of the Worlds and of Beings; the consciousness of the effort with which they all converge to the Result.

They heard the divers parts of the Infinite forming one living melody; and each time that the accord made itself felt like a mighty respiration, the Worlds drawn by the concordant movement inclined themselves toward the Supreme Being who, from His impenetrable centre, issued all things and recalled all things to Himself.

This ceaseless alternation of voices and silence seemed the rhythm of the sacred hymn which resounds and prolongs its sound from age to age.

Wilfrid and Minna were enabled to understand some of the mysterious sayings of Him who had appeared on earth in the form which to each of them had rendered him comprehensible, — to one Seraphitus, to the other Seraphita, — for they saw that all was homogeneous in the sphere where he now was.

Light gave birth to melody, melody gave birth to light; colors were light and melody; motion was a Number endowed with Utterance; all things were at once sonorous, diaphanous, and mobile; so that each interpenetrated the other, the whole vast area was unobstructed and the Angels could survey it from the depths of the Infinite.

They perceived the puerility of human sciences, of which he had spoken to them.

The scene was to them a prospect without horizon, a boundless space into which an all-consuming desire

prompted them to plunge. But, fastened to their miserable bodies, they had the desire without the power to fulfil it.

The SERAPH, preparing for his flight, no longer looked towards them; he had nothing now in common with Earth.

Upward he rose; the shadow of his luminous presence covered the two Seers like a merciful veil, enabling them to raise their eyes and see him, rising in his glory to Heaven in company with the glad Archangel.

He rose as the sun from the bosom of the Eastern waves; but, more majestic than the orb and vowed to higher destinies, he could not be enchained like inferior creations in the spiral movement of the worlds; he followed the line of the Infinite, pointing without deviation to the One Centre, there to enter his eternal life, — to receive there, in his faculties and in his essence, the power to enjoy through Love, and the gift of comprehending through Wisdom.

The scene which suddenly unveiled itself to the eyes of the two Seers crushed them with a sense of its vastness; they felt like atoms, whose minuteness was not to be compared even to the smallest particle which the infinite of divisibility enabled the mind of man to imagine, brought into the presence of the infinite of Numbers, which God alone can comprehend as He alone can comprehend Himself.

Strength and Love! what heights, what depths in those two entities, whom the Seraph's first prayer placed like two links, as it were, to unite the im-

mensities of the lower worlds with the immensity of the higher universe !

They comprehended the invisible ties by which the material worlds are bound to the spiritual worlds. Remembering the sublime efforts of human genius, they were able to perceive the principle of all melody in the songs of heaven which gave sensations of color, of perfume, of thought, which recalled the innumerable details of all creations, as the songs of earth revive the infinite memories of love.

Brought by the exaltation of their faculties to a point that cannot be described in any language, they were able to cast their eyes for an instant into the Divine World. There all was Rejoicing.

Myriads of angels were flocking together, without confusion ; all alike yet all dissimilar, simple as the flower of the fields, majestic as the universe.

Wilfrid and Minna saw neither their coming nor their going ; they appeared suddenly in the Infinite and filled it with their presence, as the stars shine in the invisible ether.

The scintillations of their united diadems illumined space like the fires of the sky at dawn upon the mountains. Waves of light flowed from their hair, and their movements created tremulous undulations in space like the billows of a phosphorescent sea.

The two Seers beheld the SERAPH dimly in the midst of the immortal legions. Suddenly, as though all the arrows of a quiver had darted together, the Spirits swept away with a breath the last vestiges of the

human form ; as the SERAPH rose he became yet purer ; soon he seemed to them but a faint outline of what he had been at the moment of his transfiguration, — lines of fire without shadow.

Higher he rose, receiving from circle to circle some new gift, while the sign of his election was transmitted to each sphere into which, more and more purified, he entered.

No voice was silent ; the hymn diffused and multiplied itself in all its modulations : —

“ Hail to him who enters living ! Come, flower of the Worlds ! diamond from the fires of suffering ! pearl without spot, desire without flesh, new link of earth and heaven, be Light ! Conquering spirit, Queen of the world, come for thy crown ! Victor of earth, receive thy diadem ! Thou art of us ! ”

The virtues of the SERAPH shone forth in all their beauty.

His earliest desire for heaven re-appeared, tender as childhood. The deeds of his life, like constellations, adorned him with their brightness. His acts of faith shone like the Jacinth of heaven, the color of sidereal fires. The pearls of Charity were upon him, — a chaplet of garnered tears ! Love divine surrounded him with roses ; and the whiteness of his Resignation obliterated all earthly trace.

Soon, to the eyes of the Seers, he was but a point of flame, growing brighter and brighter as its motion was lost in the melodious acclamations which welcomed his entrance into heaven.

The celestial accents made the two exiles weep.

Suddenly a silence as of death spread like a mourning veil from the first to the highest sphere, throwing Wilfrid and Minna into a state of intolerable expectation.

At this moment the SERAPH was lost to sight within the SANCTUARY, receiving there the gift of Life Eternal.

A movement of adoration made by the Host of heaven filled the two Seers with ecstasy mingled with terror. They felt that all were prostrate before the Throne, in all the spheres, in the Spheres Divine, in the Spiritual Spheres, and in the Worlds of Darkness.

The Angels bent the knee to celebrate the SERAPH's glory; the Spirits bent the knee in token of their impatience; others bent the knee in the dark abysses, shuddering with awe.

A mighty cry of joy gushed forth, as the spring gushes forth to its millions of flowering herbs sparkling with diamond dew-drops in the sunlight; at that instant the SERAPH reappeared, effulgent, crying, "ETERNAL! ETERNAL! ETERNAL!"

The universe heard the cry and understood it; it penetrated the spheres as God penetrates them; it took possession of the infinite; the Seven Divine Worlds heard the Voice and answered.

A mighty movement was perceptible, as though whole planets, purified, were rising in dazzling light to become Eternal.

Had the SERAPH obtained, as a first mission, the work of calling to God the creations permeated by His Word?

But already the sublime HALLELUJAH was sounding in the ear of the desolate ones as the distant undulations of an ended melody. Already the celestial lights were fading like the gold and crimson tints of a setting sun. Death and Impurity recovered their prey.

As the two mortals re-entered the prison of flesh, from which their spirit had momentarily been delivered by some priceless sleep, they felt like those who wake after a night of brilliant dreams, the memory of which still lingers in their soul, though their body retains no consciousness of them, and human language is unable to give utterance to them.

The deep darkness of the sphere that was now about them was that of the sun of the visible worlds.

“Let us descend to those lower regions,” said Wilfrid.

“Let us do what he told us to do,” answered Minna.

“We have seen the worlds on their march to God; we know the Path. Our diadem of stars is There.”

Floating downward through the abysses, they re-entered the dust of the lesser worlds, and saw the Earth, like a subterranean cavern, suddenly illuminated to their eyes by the light which their souls brought with them, and which still environed them in a cloud of the paling harmonies of heaven. The sight was that which of old struck the inner eyes of Seers and Prophets. Ministers of all religions, Preachers of all pretended truths, Kings consecrated by Force and Terror, Warriors and Mighty men apportioning the Peoples among them, the Learned and the Rich standing above the suffering, noisy crowd, and noisily grinding them beneath

their feet, — all were there, accompanied by their wives and servants ; all were robed in stuffs of gold and silver and azure studded with pearls and gems torn from the bowels of Earth, stolen from the depths of Ocean, for which Humanity had toiled throughout the centuries, sweating and blaspheming. But these treasures, these splendors, constructed of blood, seemed worn-out rags to the eyes of the two Exiles. “What do you there, in motionless ranks?” cried Wilfrid. They answered not. “What do you there, motionless?” They answered not. Wilfrid waved his hands over them, crying in a loud voice, “What do you there, in motionless ranks?” All, with unanimous action, opened their garments and gave to sight their withered bodies, eaten with worms, putrified, crumbling to dust, rotten with horrible diseases.

“You lead the nations to Death,” Wilfrid said to them. “You have depraved the earth, perverted the Word, prostituted justice. After devouring the grass of the fields you have killed the lambs of the fold. Do you think yourself justified because of your sores? I will warn my brethren who have ears to hear the Voice, and they will come and drink of the spring of Living Waters which you have hidden.”

“Let us save our strength for Prayer,” said Minna. “Wilfred, thy mission is not that of the Prophets or the Avenger or the Messenger ; we are still on the confines of the lowest sphere ; let us endeavor to rise through space on the wings of Prayer.”

“Thou shalt be all my love !”

“Thou shalt be all my strength!”

“We have seen the Mysteries; we are, each to the other, the only being here below to whom Joy and Sadness are comprehensible; let us pray, therefore: we know the Path, let us walk in it.”

“Give me thy hand,” said the Young Girl, “if we walk together, the way will be to me less hard and long.”

“With thee, with thee alone,” replied the Man, “can I cross the awful solitude without complaint.”

“Together we will go to Heaven,” she said.

The clouds gathered and formed a darksome dais. Suddenly the pair found themselves kneeling beside a body which old David was guarding from curious eyes, resolved to bury it himself.

Beyond those walls the first summer of the nineteenth century shone forth in all its glory. The two lovers believed they heard a Voice in the sun-rays. They breathed a celestial essence from the new-born flowers. Holding each other by the hand, they said, “That illimitable ocean which shines below us is but an image of what we saw above.”

“Where are you going?” asked Monsieur Becker.

“To God,” they answered. “Come with us, father.”

THE ALKAHEST;
OR,
THE HOUSE OF CLAÉS.

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I.

THERE is a house at Douai in the rue de Paris, whose aspect, interior arrangements, and details have preserved, to a greater degree than those of other domiciles, the characteristics of the old Flemish buildings, so naïvely adapted to the patriarchal manners and customs of that excellent land. Before describing this house it may be well, in the interest of other writers, to explain the necessity for such didactic preliminaries, — since they have roused a protest from certain ignorant and voracious readers who want emotions without undergoing the generating process, the flower without the seed, the child without gestation. Is Art supposed to have higher powers than Nature?

The events of human existence, whether public or private, are so closely allied to architecture that the

majority of observers can reconstruct nations and individuals, in their habits and ways of life, from the remains of public monuments or the relics of a home. Archæology is to social nature what comparative anatomy is to organized nature. A mosaic tells the tale of a society, as the skeleton of an ichthyosaurus opens up a creative epoch. All things are linked together, and all are therefore deducible. Causes suggest effects, effects lead back to causes. Science resuscitates even the warts of the past ages.

Hence the keen interest inspired by an architectural description, provided the imagination of the writer does not distort essential facts. The mind is enabled by rigid deduction to link it with the past; and to man, the past is singularly like the future; tell him what has been, and you seldom fail to show him what will be. It is rare indeed that the picture of a locality where lives are lived does not recall to some their dawning hopes, to others their wasted faith. The comparison between a present which disappoints man's secret wishes and a future which may realize them, is an inexhaustible source of sadness or of placid content.

Thus, it is almost impossible not to feel a certain tender sensibility over a picture of Flemish life, if the accessories are clearly given. Why so? Perhaps, among other forms of existence, it offers the best conclusion to man's uncertainties. It has its social festivities, its

family ties, and the easy affluence which proves the stability of its comfortable well-being ; it does not lack repose amounting almost to beatitude ; but, above all, it expresses the calm monotony of a frankly sensuous happiness, where enjoyment stifles desire by anticipating it. Whatever value a passionate soul may attach to the tumultuous life of feeling, it never sees without emotion the symbols of this Flemish nature, where the throbbings of the heart are so well regulated that superficial minds deny the heart's existence. The crowd prefers the abnormal force which overflows to that which moves with steady persistence. The world has neither time nor patience to realize the immense power concealed beneath an appearance of uniformity. Therefore, to impress this multitude carried away on the current of existence, passion, like a great artist, is compelled to go beyond the mark, to exaggerate, as did Michael Angelo, Bianca Capello, Mademoiselle de la Vallière, Beethoven, and Paganini. Far-seeing minds alone disapprove such excess, and respect only the energy represented by a finished execution whose perfect quiet charms superior men. The life of this essentially thrifty people amply fulfils the conditions of happiness which the masses desire as the lot of the average citizen.

A refined materialism is stamped on all the habits of Flemish life. English comfort is harsh in tone and

arid in color ; whereas the old-fashioned Flemish interiors rejoice the eye with their mellow tints, and the feelings with their genuine heartiness. There, work implies no weariness, and the pipe is a happy adaptation of Neapolitan *far-niente*. Thence comes the peaceful sentiment in Art (its most essential condition), patience, and the element which renders its creations durable, namely, conscience. Indeed, the Flemish character lies in the two words, patience and conscience : words which seem at first to exclude the richness of poetic light and shade, and to make the manners and customs of the country as flat as its vast plains, as cold as its foggy skies. And yet it is not so. Civilization has brought her power to bear, and has modified all things, even the effects of climate. If we observe attentively the productions of various parts of the globe, we are surprised to find that the prevailing tints from the temperate zones are gray or fawn, while the more brilliant colors belong to the products of the hotter climates. The manners and customs of a country must naturally conform to this law of nature.

Flanders, which in former times was essentially dun-colored and monotonous in tint, learned the means of irradiating its smoky atmosphere through its political vicissitudes, which brought it under the successive dominion of Burgundy, Spain, and France, and threw it into fraternal relations with Germany and Holland.

From Spain it acquired the luxury of scarlet dyes and shimmering satins, tapestries of vigorous design, plumes, mandolins, and courtly bearing. In exchange for its linen and its laces, it brought from Venice that fairy glass-ware in which wine sparkles and seems the mellower. From Austria it learned the ponderous diplomacy which, to use a popular saying, takes three steps backward to one forward; while its trade with India poured into it the grotesque designs of China and the marvels of Japan.

And yet, in spite of its patience in gathering such treasures, its tenacity in parting with no possession once gained, its endurance of all things, Flanders was considered nothing more than the general storehouse of Europe, until the day when the discovery of tobacco brought into one smoky outline the scattered features of its national physiognomy. Thenceforth, and notwithstanding the parcelling out of their territory, the Flemings became a people homogeneous through their pipes and beer.¹

After assimilating, by constant sober regulation of conduct, the products and the ideas of its masters and its neighbors, this country of Flanders, by nature so

¹ Flanders was parcelled into three divisions; of which Eastern Flanders, capital Ghent, and Western Flanders, capital Bruges, are two provinces of Belgium. French Flanders, capital Lille, is the Departement du Nord of France. Douai, about twenty miles from Lille, is the chief town of the arrondissement du Nord.

tame and devoid of poetry, worked out for itself an original existence, with characteristic manners and customs which bear no signs of servile imitation. Art stripped off its ideality and produced form alone. We may seek in vain for plastic grace, the swing of comedy, dramatic action, musical genius, or the bold flight of ode and epic. On the other hand, the people are fertile in discoveries, and trained to scientific discussions which demand time and the midnight oil. All things bear the ear-mark of temporal enjoyment. There men look exclusively to the thing that is: their thoughts are so scrupulously bent on supplying the wants of this life that they have never risen, in any direction, above the level of this present earth. The sole idea they have ever conceived of the future is that of a thrifty, prosaic statecraft: their revolutionary vigor came from a domestic desire to live as they liked, with their elbows on the table, and to take their ease under the projecting roofs of their own porches.

The consciousness of well-being and the spirit of independence which comes of prosperity begot in Flanders, sooner than elsewhere, that craving for liberty which, later, permeated all Europe. Thus the compactness of their ideas, and the tenacity which education grafted on their nature made the Flemish people a formidable body of men in the defence of their rights. Among them nothing is half-done, — neither houses, furniture,

dikes, husbandry, nor revolutions ; and they hold a monopoly of all that they undertake. The manufacture of linen, and that of lace, a work of patient agriculture and still more patient industry, are hereditary like their family fortunes. If we were asked to show in human form the purest specimen of solid stability, we could do no better than point to a portrait of some old burgo-master, capable, as was proved again and again, of dying in a commonplace way, and without the incitements of glory, for the welfare of his Free-town.

Yet we shall find a tender and poetic side to this patriarchal life, which will come naturally to the surface in the description of an ancient house which, at the period when this history begins, was one of the last in Douai to preserve the old-time characteristics of Flemish life.

Of all the towns in the Departement du Nord, Douai is, alas, the most modernized : there the innovating spirit has made the greatest strides, and the love of social progress is the most diffused. There the old buildings are daily disappearing, and the manners and customs of a venerable past are being rapidly obliterated. Parisian ideas and fashions and modes of life now rule the day, and soon nothing will be left of that ancient Flemish life but the warmth of its hospitality, its traditional Spanish courtesy, and the wealth and cleanliness of Holland. Mansions of white stone are replacing

the old brick buildings, and the cosy comfort of Batavian interiors is fast yielding before the capricious elegance of Parisian novelties.

The house in which the events of this history occurred stands at about the middle of the rue de Paris, and has been known at Douai for more than two centuries as the House of Claës. The Van Claës were formerly one of the great families of craftsmen to whom, in various lines of production, the Netherlands owed a commercial supremacy which it has never lost. For a long period of time the Claës lived at Ghent, and were, from generation to generation, the syndics of the powerful Guild of Weavers. When the great city revolted against Charles V., who tried to suppress its privileges, the head of the Claës family was so deeply compromised in the rebellion that, foreseeing a catastrophe and bound to share the fate of his associates, he secretly sent wife, children, and property to France before the Emperor invested the town. The syndic's forebodings were justified. Together with other burghers who were excluded from the capitulation, he was hanged as a rebel, though he was, in reality, the defender of the liberties of Ghent.

The death of Claës and his associates bore fruit. Their needless execution cost the King of Spain the greater part of his possessions in the Netherlands. Of all the seed sown in the earth, the blood of martyrs

gives the quickest harvest. When Philip the Second, who punished revolt through two generations, stretched his iron sceptre over Douai, the Claës preserved their great wealth by allying themselves in marriage with the very noble family of Molina, whose elder branch, then poor, thus became rich enough to buy the county of Nourho which they had long held titularly in the kingdom of Léon.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, after vicissitudes which are of no interest to our present purpose, the family of Claës was represented at Douai in the person of Monsieur Balthazar Claës-Molina, Comte de Nourho, who preferred to be called simply Balthazar Claës. Of the immense fortune amassed by his ancestors, who had kept in motion over a thousand looms, there remained to him some fifteen thousand francs a year from landed property in the arrondissement of Douai, and the house in the rue de Paris, whose furniture in itself was a fortune. As to the family possessions in Léon, they had been in litigation between the Molinas of Douai and the branch of the family which remained in Spain. The Molinas of Léon won the domain and assumed the title of Comtes de Nourho, though the Claës alone had a legal right to it. But the pride of a Belgian burgher was superior to the haughty arrogance of Castile: after the civil rights were instituted, Balthazar Claës cast aside the ragged

robes of his Spanish nobility for his more illustrious descent from the Ghent martyr.

The patriotic sentiment was so strongly developed in the families exiled under Charles V. that, to the very close of the eighteenth century, the Claës remained faithful to the manners and customs and traditions of their ancestors. They married into none but the purest burgher families, and required a certain number of aldermen and burgomasters in the pedigree of every bride-elect before admitting her to the family. They sought their wives in Bruges or Ghent, in Liège or in Holland; so that the time-honored domestic customs might be perpetuated around their hearthstones. This social group became more and more restricted, until, at the close of the last century, it mustered only some seven or eight families of the parliamentary nobility, whose manners and flowing robes of office and magisterial gravity (partly Spanish) harmonized well with the habits of their life.

The inhabitants of Douai held the family in a religious esteem that was well-nigh superstition. The sturdy honesty, the untainted loyalty of the Claës, their unfailing decorum of manners and conduct, made them the objects of a reverence which found expression in the name,—the House of Claës. The whole spirit of ancient Flanders breathed in that mansion, which afforded to the lovers of burgher antiquities a type of the

modest houses which the wealthy craftsmen of the Middle Ages constructed for their homes.

The chief ornament of the façade was an oaken door, in two sections, studded with nails driven in the pattern of a quincunx, in the centre of which the Claës pride had carved a pair of shuttles. The recess of the doorway, which was built of freestone, was topped by a pointed arch bearing a little shrine surmounted by a cross, in which was a statuette of Sainte-Geneviève playing her distaff. Though time had left its mark upon the delicate workmanship of portal and shrine, the extreme care taken of it by the servants of the house allowed the passers-by to note all its details.

The casing of the door, formed by fluted pilasters, was dark gray in color, and so highly polished that it shone as if varnished. On either side of the doorway, on the ground-floor, were two windows, which resembled all the other windows of the house. The casing of white stone ended below the sill in a richly carved shell, and rose above the window in an arch, supported at its apex by the head-piece of a cross, which divided the glass sashes in four unequal parts; for the transversal bar, placed at the height of that in a Latin cross, made the lower sashes of the window nearly double the height of the upper, the latter rounding at the sides into the arch. The coping of the arch was ornamented with three rows of brick, placed one above the other, the

bricks alternately projecting or retreating to the depth of an inch, giving the effect of a Greek moulding. The glass panes, which were small and diamond-shaped, were set in very slender leading, painted red. The walls of the house, of brick pointed with white mortar, were braced at regular distances, and at the angles of the house, by stone courses.

The first floor was pierced by five windows, the second by three, while the attic had only one large circular opening in five divisions, surrounded by a freestone moulding and placed in the centre of the triangular pediment defined by the gable-roof, like the rose-window of a cathedral. At the peak was a vane in the shape of a weaver's shuttle threaded with flax. Both sides of the large triangular pediment which formed the wall of the gable were dentelled squarely into something like steps, as low down as the string-course of the upper floor, where the rain from the roof fell to right and left of the house through the jaws of a fantastic gargoyle. A freestone foundation projected like a step at the base of the house; and on either side of the entrance, between the two windows, was a trap-door, clamped by heavy iron bands, through which the cellars were entered, — a last vestige of ancient usages.

From the time the house was built, this façade had been carefully cleaned twice a year. If a little mortar fell from between the bricks, the crack was instantly

filled up. The sashes, the sills, the copings, were dusted oftener than the most precious sculptures in the Louvre. The front of the house bore no signs of decay ; notwithstanding the deepened color which age had given to the bricks, it was as well preserved as a choice old picture, or some rare book cherished by an amateur, which would be ever new were it not for the blistering of our climate and the effect of gases, whose pernicious breath threatens our own health.

The cloudy skies and humid atmosphere of Flanders, and the shadows produced by the narrowness of the street, sometimes diminished the brilliancy which the old house derived from its cleanliness ; moreover, the very care bestowed upon it made it rather sad and chilling to the eye. A poet might have wished some leafage about the shrine, a little moss in the crevices of the freestone, a break in the even courses of the brick ; he would have longed for the swallow to build her nest in the red coping that roofed the arches of the windows. The precise and immaculate air of this façade, a little worn by perpetual rubbing, gave the house a tone of severe propriety and estimable decency which would have driven a romanticist out of the neighborhood, had he happened to take lodgings over the way.

When a visitor had pulled the braided iron wire bell-cord which hung from the top of the pilaster of the doorway, and the servant-woman, coming from within,

had admitted him through the side of the double-door in which was a small grated loop-hole, that half of the door escaped from her hand and swung back by its own weight with a solemn, ponderous sound that echoed along the roof of a wide paved archway and through the depths of the house, as though the door had been of iron. This archway, painted to resemble marble, always clean and daily sprinkled with fresh sand, led into a large court-yard paved with smooth square stones of a greenish color. On the left were the linen-rooms, kitchens, and servants' hall; to the right, the wood-house, coal-house, and offices, whose doors, walls, and windows were decorated with designs kept exquisitely clean. The daylight, threading its way between four red walls chequered with white lines, caught rosy tints and reflections which gave a mysterious grace and fantastic appearance to faces, and even to trifling details.

A second house, exactly like the building on the street, and called in Flanders the "back-quarter," stood at the farther end of the court-yard, and was used exclusively as the family dwelling. The first room on the ground-floor was a parlor, lighted by two windows on the court-yard, and two more looking out upon a garden which was of the same size as the house. Two glass doors, placed exactly opposite to each other, led at one end of the room to the garden, at the other to the court-yard, and were in line with the archway

and the street door; so that a visitor entering the latter could see through to the greenery which draped the lower end of the garden. The front building, which was reserved for receptions and the lodging-rooms of guests, held many objects of art and accumulated wealth, but none of them equalled in the eyes of a Claës, nor indeed in the judgment of a connoisseur, the treasures contained in the parlor, where for over two centuries the family life had glided on.

The Claës who died for the liberties of Ghent, and who might in these days be thought a mere ordinary craftsman if the historian omitted to say that he possessed over forty thousand silver marks, obtained by the manufacture of sail-cloth for the all-powerful Venetian navy, — this Claës had a friend in the famous sculptor in wood, Van Huysum of Bruges. The artist had dipped many a time into the purse of the rich craftsman. Some time before the rebellion of the men of Ghent, Van Huysum, grown rich himself, had secretly carved for his friend a wall-decoration in ebony, representing the chief scenes in the life of Van Artevelde, — that brewer of Ghent who, for a brief hour, was King of Flanders. This wall-covering, of which there were no less than sixty panels, contained about fourteen hundred principal figures, and was held to be Van Huysum's masterpiece. The officer appointed to guard the burghers whom Charles V. determined to hang when

he re-entered his native town, proposed, it is said, to Van Claës to let him escape if he would give him Van Huysum's great work; but the weaver had already despatched it to Douai.

The parlor, whose walls were entirely panelled with this carving, which Van Huysum, out of regard for the martyr's memory, came to Douai to frame in wood painted in lapis-lazuli with threads of gold, is therefore the most complete work of this master, whose least carvings now sell for nearly their weight in gold. Hanging over the fire-place, Van Claës the martyr, painted by Titian in his robes as president of the Court of Parchons, still seemed the head of the family, who venerated him as their greatest man. The chimney-piece, originally in stone with a very high mantle-shelf, had been made over in marble during the last century; on it now stood an old clock and two candlesticks with five twisted branches, in bad taste, but of solid silver. The four windows were draped by wide curtains of red damask with a flowered black design, lined with white silk; the furniture, covered with the same material, had been renovated in the time of Louis XIV. The floor, evidently modern, was laid in large squares of white wood bordered with strips of oak. The ceiling, formed of many oval panels, in each of which Van Huysum had carved a grotesque mask, had been respected and allowed to keep the brown tones of the native Dutch oak.

In the four corners of this parlor were truncated columns, supporting candelabra exactly like those on the mantle-shelf; and a round table stood in the middle of the room. Along the walls card-tables were symmetrically placed. On two gilded consoles with marble slabs there stood, at the period when this history begins, two glass globes filled with water, in which, above a bed of sand and shells, red and gold and silver fish were swimming about. The room was both brilliant and sombre. The ceiling necessarily absorbed the light and reflected none. Although on the garden side all was bright and glowing, and the sunshine danced upon the ebony carvings, the windows on the court-yard admitted so little light that the gold threads in the lapis-lazuli scarcely glittered on the opposite wall. This parlor, which could be gorgeous on a fine day, was usually, under the Flemish skies, filled with soft shadows and melancholy russet tones, like those shed by the sun on the tree-tops of the forests in autumn.

It is unnecessary to continue this description of the House of Claës, in other parts of which many scenes of this history will occur: at present, it is enough to make known its general arrangement.

II.

TOWARDS the end of August, 1812, on a Sunday evening after vespers, a woman was sitting in a deep armchair placed before one of the windows looking out upon the garden. The sun's rays fell obliquely upon the house and athwart the parlor, breaking into fantastic lights on the carved panellings of the wall, and wrapping the woman in a crimson halo projected through the damask curtains which draped the window. Even an ordinary painter, had he sketched this woman at this particular moment, would assuredly have produced a striking picture of a head that was full of pain and melancholy. The attitude of the body, and that of the feet stretched out before her, showed the prostration of one who loses consciousness of physical being in the concentration of powers absorbed in a fixed idea: she was following its gleams in the far future, just as sometimes on the shores of the sea, we gaze at a ray of sunlight which pierces the clouds and draws a luminous line to the horizon.

The hands of this woman hung nerveless outside the arms of her chair, and her head, as if too heavy to hold

up, lay back upon its cushions. A dress of white cambric, very full and flowing, hindered any judgment as to the proportions of her figure, and the bust was concealed by the folds of a scarf crossed on the bosom and negligently knotted. If the light had not thrown into relief her face, which she seemed to show in preference to the rest of her person, it would still have been impossible to escape riveting the attention exclusively upon it. Its expression of stupefaction, which was cold and rigid despite hot tears that were rolling from her eyes, would have struck the most thoughtless mind. Nothing is more terrible to behold than excessive grief that is rarely allowed to break forth, of which traces were left on this woman's face like lava congealed about a crater. She might have been a dying mother compelled to leave her children in abysmal depths of wretchedness, unable to bequeath them to any human protector.

The countenance of this lady, then about forty years of age and not nearly so far from handsome as she had been in her youth, bore none of the characteristics of a Flemish woman. Her thick black hair fell in heavy curls upon her shoulders and about her cheeks. The forehead, very prominent, and narrow at the temples, was yellow in tint, but beneath it sparkled two black eyes that were capable of emitting flames. Her face, altogether Spanish, dark skinned, with little color and

pitted by the small-pox, attracted the eye by the beauty of its oval, whose outline, though slightly impaired by time, preserved a finished elegance and dignity, and regained at times its full perfection when some effort of the soul restored its pristine purity. The most noticeable feature in this strong face was the nose, aquiline as the beak of an eagle, and so sharply curved at the middle as to give the idea of an interior malformation ; yet there was an air of indescribable delicacy about it, and the partition between the nostrils was so thin that a rosy light shone through it. Though the lips, which were large and curved, betrayed the pride of noble birth, their expression was one of kindness and natural courtesy.

The beauty of this vigorous yet feminine face might indeed be questioned, but the face itself commanded attention. Short, deformed, and lame, this woman remained all the longer unmarried because the world obstinately refused to credit her with gifts of mind. Yet there were men who were deeply stirred by the passionate ardor of that face and its tokens of ineffable tenderness, and who remained under a charm that was seemingly irreconcilable with such personal defects.

She was very like her grandfather, the Duke of Casa-Réal, a grandee of Spain. At this moment, when we first see her, the charm which in earlier days despotically grasped the soul of poets and lovers of poesy now

emanated from that head with greater vigor than at any former period of her life, spending itself, as it were, upon the void, and expressing a nature of all-powerful fascination over men, though it was at the same time powerless over destiny.

When her eyes turned from the glass globes, where they were gazing at the fish they saw not, she raised them with a despairing action, as if to invoke the skies. Her sufferings seemed of a kind that are told to God alone. The silence was unbroken save for the chirp of crickets and the shrill whirr of a few locusts, coming from the little garden then hotter than an oven, and the dull sound of silver and plates, and the moving of chairs in the adjoining room, where a servant was preparing to serve the dinner.

At this moment, the distressed woman roused herself from her abstraction and listened attentively ; she took her handkerchief, wiped away her tears, attempted to smile, and so resolutely effaced the expression of pain that was stamped on every feature that she presently seemed in the state of happy indifference which comes with a life exempt from care. Whether it were that the habit of living in this house to which infirmities confined her enabled her to perceive certain natural effects that are imperceptible to the senses of others, but which persons under the influence of excessive feeling are keen to discover, or whether Nature, in compensation

for her physical defects, had given her more delicate sensations than better organized beings, — it is certain that this woman had heard the steps of a man in a gallery built above the kitchens and the servants' hall, by which the front house communicated with the "back-quarter." The steps grew more distinct. Soon, without possessing the power of this ardent creature to abolish space and meet her other self, even a stranger would have heard the foot-fall of a man upon the staircase which led down from the gallery to the parlor.

The sound of that step would have startled the most heedless being into thought ; it was impossible to hear it coolly. A precipitate, headlong step produces fear. When a man springs forward and cries, "Fire!" his feet speak as loudly as his voice. If this be so, then a contrary gait ought not to cause less powerful emotion. The slow approach, the dragging step of the coming man might have irritated an unreflecting spectator ; but an observer, or a nervous person, would undoubtedly have felt something akin to terror at the measured tread of feet that seemed devoid of life, and under which the stairs creaked loudly, as though two iron weights were striking them alternately. The mind recognized at once either the heavy, undecided step of an old man or the majestic tread of a great thinker bearing the worlds with him.

When the man had reached the lowest stair, and had

planted both feet upon the tiled floor with a hesitating, uncertain movement, he stood still for a moment on the wide landing which led on one side to the servants' hall, and on the other to the parlor through a door concealed in the panelling of that room, — as was another door, leading from the parlor to the dining-room. At this moment a slight shudder, like the sensation caused by an electric spark, shook the woman seated in the arm-chair; then a soft smile brightened her lips, and her face, moved by the expectation of a pleasure, shone like that of an Italian Madonna. She suddenly gained strength to drive her terrors back into the depths of her heart. Then she turned her face to the panel of the wall which she knew was about to open, and which in fact was now pushed in with such brusque violence that the poor woman herself seemed jarred by the shock.

Balthazar Claës suddenly appeared, made a few steps forward, did not look at the woman, or if he looked at her did not see her, and stood erect in the middle of the parlor, leaning his half-bowed head on his right hand. A sharp pang to which the woman could not accustom herself, although it was daily renewed, wrung her heart, dispelled her smile, contracted the sallow forehead between the eyebrows, indenting that line which the frequent expression of excessive feeling scores so deeply; her eyes filled with tears, but she wiped them quickly as she looked at Balthazar.

It was impossible not to be deeply impressed by this head of the family of Claës. When young, he must have resembled the noble family martyr who had threatened to be another Artevelde to Charles V. ; but as he stood there at this moment, he seemed over sixty years of age, though he was only fifty ; and this premature old age had destroyed the honorable likeness. His tall figure was slightly bent, — either because his labors, whatever they were, obliged him to stoop, or that the spinal column was curved by the weight of his head. He had a broad chest and square shoulders, but the lower parts of the body were lank and wasted, though nervous ; and this discrepancy in a physical organization evidently once perfect puzzled the mind which endeavored to explain this anomalous figure by some possible singularities of the man's life.

His thick blond hair, ill cared-for, fell over his shoulders in the Dutch fashion, and its very disorder was in keeping with the general eccentricity of his person. His broad brow showed certain protuberances which Gall identifies with poetic genius. His clear and full blue eyes had the brusque vivacity which may be noticed in searchers for occult causes. The nose, probably perfect in early life, was now elongated, and the nostrils seemed to have gradually opened wider from an involuntary tension of the olfactory muscles. The cheek-bones were very prominent, which made the

cheeks themselves, already withered, seem more sunken ; his mouth, full of sweetness, was squeezed in between the nose and a short chin, which projected sharply. The shape of the face, however, was long rather than oval, and the scientific doctrine which sees in every human face a likeness to an animal would have found its confirmation in that of Balthazar Claës, which bore a strong resemblance to a horse's head. The skin clung closely to the bones, as though some inward fire were incessantly drying its juices. Sometimes, when he gazed into space, as if to see the realization of his hopes, it almost seemed as though the flames that devoured his soul were issuing from his nostrils.

The inspired feelings that animate great men shone forth on the pale face furrowed with wrinkles, on the brow haggard with care like that of an old monarch, but above all they gleamed in the sparkling eye, whose fires were fed by chastity imposed by the tyranny of ideas and by the inward consecration of a great intellect. The cavernous eyes seemed to have sunk in their orbits through midnight vigils and the terrible reaction of hopes destroyed, yet ceaselessly reborn. The zealous fanaticism inspired by an art or a science was evident in this man ; it betrayed itself in the strange, persistent abstraction of his mind expressed by his dress and bearing, which were in keeping with the anomalous peculiarities of his person.

His large, hairy hands were dirty, and the nails, which were very long, had deep black lines at their extremities. His shoes were not cleaned and the shoe-strings were missing. Of all that Flemish household, the master alone took the strange liberty of being slovenly. His black cloth trousers were covered with stains, his waistcoat was unbuttoned, his cravat awry, his greenish coat ripped at the seams, — completing an array of signs, great and small, which in any other man would have betokened a poverty begotten of vice, but which in Balthazar Claës was the negligence of genius.

Vice and Genius too often produce the same effects; and this misleads the common mind. What is genius but a long excess which squanders time and wealth and physical powers, and leads more rapidly to a hospital than the worst of passions? Men even seem to have more respect for vices than for genius, since to the latter they refuse credit. The profits accruing from the hidden labors of the brain are so remote that the social world fears to square accounts with the man of learning in his lifetime, preferring to get rid of its obligations by not forgiving his misfortunes or his poverty.

If, in spite of this inveterate forgetfulness of the present, Balthazar Claës had abandoned his mysterious abstractions, if some sweet and companionable meaning had revisited that thoughtful countenance, if the fixed eyes had lost their rigid strain and shone with

feeling, if he had ever looked humanly about him and returned to the real life of common things, it would indeed have been difficult not to do involuntary homage to the winning beauty of his face and the gracious soul that would then have shone from it. As it was, all who looked at him regretted that the man belonged no more to the world at large, and said to one another : “ He must have been very handsome in his youth.” A vulgar error ! Never was Balthazar Claës’s appearance more poetic than at this moment. Lavater, had he seen him, would fain have studied that head so full of patience, of Flemish loyalty, and pure morality, — where all was broad and noble, and passion seemed calm because it was strong.

The conduct of this man could not be otherwise than pure ; his word was sacred, his friendships seemed undeviating, his self-devotedness complete : and yet the will to employ those qualities in patriotic service, for the world or for the family, was directed, fatally, elsewhere. This citizen, bound to guard the welfare of a household, to manage property, to guide his children towards a noble future, was living outside the line of his duty and his affections, in communion with an attendant spirit. A priest might have thought him inspired by the word of God ; an artist would have hailed him as a great master ; an enthusiast would have taken him for a seer of the Swedenborgian faith.

At the present moment, the dilapidated, uncouth, and ruined clothes that he wore contrasted strangely with the graceful elegance of the woman who was sadly admiring him. Deformed persons who have intellect, or nobility of soul, show an exquisite taste in their apparel. Either they dress simply, convinced that their charm is wholly moral, or they make others forget their imperfections by an elegance of detail which diverts the eye and occupies the mind. Not only did this woman possess a noble soul, but she loved Balthazar Claës with that instinct of the woman which gives a foretaste of the communion of angels. Brought up in one of the most illustrious families of Belgium, she would have learned good taste had she not possessed it; and now, taught by the desire of constantly pleasing the man she loved, she knew how to clothe herself admirably, and without producing incongruity between her elegance and the defects of her conformation. The bust, however, was defective in the shoulders only, one of which was noticeably much larger than the other.

She looked out of the window into the court-yard, then towards the garden, as if to make sure she was alone with Balthazar, and presently said, in a gentle voice and with a look full of a Flemish woman's submissiveness, — for between these two love had long since driven out the pride of her Spanish nature: —

“Balthazar, are you so very busy? this is the

thirty-third Sunday since you have been to mass or vespers."

Claës did not answer; his wife bowed her head, clasped her hands, and waited: she knew that his silence meant neither contempt nor indifference, only a tyrannous preoccupation. Balthazar was one of those beings who preserve deep in their souls and after long years all their youthful delicacy of feeling; he would have thought it criminal to wound by so much as a word a woman weighed down by the sense of physical disfigurement. No man knew better than he that a look, a word, suffices to blot out years of happiness, and is the more cruel because it contrasts with the unfailing tenderness of the past: our nature leads us to suffer more from one discord in our happiness than pleasure coming in the midst of trouble can bring us joy.

Presently Balthazar appeared to waken; he looked quickly about him, and said, —

"Vespers? Ah, yes! the children are at vespers."

He made a few steps forward, and looked into the garden, where magnificent tulips were growing on all sides; then he suddenly stopped short as if brought up against a wall, and cried out, —

"Why should they not combine within a given time?"

"Is he going mad?" thought the wife, much terrified

To give greater interest to the present scene, which was called forth by the situation of their affairs, it is absolutely necessary to glance back at the past lives of Balthazar Claës and the granddaughter of the Duke of Casa-Réal.

Towards the year 1783, Monsieur Balthazar Claës-Molina de Nourho, then twenty-two years of age, was what is called in France a fine man. He came to finish his education in Paris, where he acquired excellent manners in the society of Madame d'Egmont, Count Horn, the Prince of Aremberg, the Spanish ambassador, Helvetius, and other Frenchmen originally from Belgium, or coming lately thence, whose birth or wealth won them admittance among the great seigneurs who at that time gave the tone to social life. Young Claës found several relations and friends ready to launch him into the great world at the very moment when that world was about to fall. Like other young men, he was at first more attracted by glory and science than by the vanities of life. He frequented the society of scientific men, particularly Lavoisier, who at that time was better known to the world for his enormous fortune as a *fermier-général* than for his discoveries in chemistry, — though later the great chemist was to eclipse the man of wealth.

Balthazar grew enamoured of the science which Lavoisier cultivated, and became his devoted disciple ;

but he was young, and handsome as Helvetius, and before long the Parisian women taught him to distil wit and love exclusively. Though he had studied chemistry with such ardor that Lavoisier commended him, he deserted science and his master for those mistresses of fashion and good taste from whom young men take finishing lessons in knowledge of life, and learn the usages of good society, which in Europe forms, as it were, one family.

The intoxicating dream of social success lasted but a short time. Balthazar left Paris, weary of a hollow existence which suited neither his ardent soul nor his loving heart. Domestic life, so calm, so tender, which the very name of Flanders recalled to him, seemed far more fitted to his character and to the aspirations of his heart. No gilded Parisian salon had effaced from his mind the harmonies of the panelled parlor and the little garden where his happy childhood had slipped away. A man must needs be without a home to remain in Paris, — Paris, the city of cosmopolitans, of men who wed the world, and clasp her with the arms of Science, Art, or Power.

The son of Flanders came back to Douai, like La Fontaine's pigeon to its nest; he wept with joy as he re-entered the town on the day of the Gayant procession, — Gayant, the superstitious luck of Douai, the glory of Flemish traditions, introduced there at the

time the Claës family had emigrated from Ghent. The death of Balthazar's father and mother had left the old mansion deserted, and the young man was occupied for a time in settling its affairs. His first grief over, he wished to marry; he needed the domestic happiness whose every religious aspect had fastened upon his mind. He even followed the family custom of seeking a wife in Ghent, or at Bruges, or Antwerp; but it happened that no woman whom he met there suited him. Undoubtedly, he had certain peculiar ideas as to marriage; from his youth he had been accused of never following the beaten track.

One day, at the house of a relation in Ghent, he heard a young lady, then living in Brussels, spoken of in a manner which gave rise to a long discussion. Some said that the beauty of Mademoiselle de Temninck was destroyed by the imperfections of her figure; others declared that she was perfect in spite of her defects. Balthazar's old cousin, at whose house the discussion took place, assured his guests that, handsome or not, she had a soul that would make him marry her were he a marrying man; and he told how she had lately renounced her share of her parents' property to enable her brother to make a marriage worthy of his name; thus preferring his happiness to her own, and sacrificing her future to his interests, — for it was not to be supposed that Mademoiselle de Temninck would marry late

in life and without property when, young and wealthy, she had met with no aspirant.

A few days later, Balthazar Claës made the acquaintance of Mademoiselle de Temninck ; with whom he fell deeply in love. At first, Joséphine de Temninck thought herself the object of a mere caprice, and refused to listen to Monsieur Claës ; but passion is contagious ; and to a poor girl who was lame and ill-made, the sense of inspiring love in a young and handsome man carries with it such strong seduction that she finally consented to allow him to woo her.

It would need a volume to paint the love of a young girl humbly submissive to the verdict of a world that calls her plain, while she feels within her the irresistible charm which comes of sensibility and true feeling. It involves fierce jealousy of happiness, freaks of cruel vengeance against some fancied rival who wins a glance, — emotions, terrors, unknown to the majority of women, and which ought, therefore, to be more than indicated. The doubt, the dramatic doubt of love, is the keynote of this analysis, where certain souls will find once more the lost, but unforgotten, poetry of their early struggles ; the passionate exaltations of the heart which the face must not betray ; the fear that we may not be understood, and the boundless joy of being so ; the hesitations of the soul which recoils upon itself, and the magnetic propulsions which give to the eyes an in-
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tude of shades ; the promptings to suicide caused by a word, dispelled by an intonation ; trembling glances which veil an inward daring ; sudden desires to speak and act that are paralyzed by their own violence ; the secret eloquence of common phrases spoken in a quivering voice ; the mysterious workings of that pristine modesty of soul and that divine discernment which lead to hidden generosities, and give so exquisite a flavor to silent devotion ; in short, all the loveliness of young love, and the weaknesses of its power.

Mademoiselle Joséphine de Temninck was coquettish from nobility of soul. The sense of her obvious imperfections made her as difficult to win as the handsomest of women. The fear of some day displeasing the eye roused her pride, destroyed her trustfulness, and gave her the courage to hide in the depths of her heart that dawning happiness which other women delight in making known by their manners, — wearing it proudly, like a coronet. The more love urged her towards Balthazar, the less she dared to express her feelings. The glance, the gesture, the question and answer as it were of a pretty woman, so flattering to the man she loves, would they not be in her case mere humiliating speculation ? A beautiful woman can be her natural self, — the world overlooks her little follies or her clumsiness ; whereas a single criticising glance checks the noblest expression on the lips of an ugly woman, adds to the ill-grace of

her gesture, gives timidity to her eyes and awkwardness to her whole bearing. She knows too well that to her alone the world condones no faults; she is denied the right to repair them; indeed, the chance to do so is never given. This necessity of being perfect and on her guard at every moment, must surely chill her faculties and numb their exercise? Such a woman can exist only in an atmosphere of angelic forbearance. Where are the hearts from which forbearance comes with no alloy of bitter and stinging pity?

These thoughts, to which the codes of social life had accustomed her, and the sort of consideration more wounding than insult shown to her by the world, — a consideration which increases a misfortune by making it apparent, — oppressed Mademoiselle de Temninck with a constant sense of embarrassment, which drove back into her soul its happiest expression, and chilled and stiffened her attitudes, her speech, her looks. Loving and beloved, she dared to be eloquent or beautiful only when alone. Unhappy and oppressed in the broad daylight of life, she might have been enchanting could she have expanded in the shadow. Often, to test the love thus offered to her, and at the risk of losing it, she refused to wear the draperies that concealed some portion of her defects, and her Spanish eyes grew entrancing when they saw that Balthazar thought her beautiful as before.

Nevertheless, even so, distrust spoiled the rare moments when she yielded herself to happiness. She asked herself if Claës were not seeking a domestic slave, — one who would necessarily keep the house? whether he had himself no secret imperfection which obliged him to be satisfied with a poor, deformed girl? Such perpetual misgivings gave a priceless value to the few short hours during which she trusted the sincerity and the permanence of a love which was to avenge her on the world. Sometimes she provoked hazardous discussions, and probed the inner consciousness of her lover by exaggerating her defects. At such times she often wrung from Balthazar truths that were far from flattering; but she loved the embarrassment into which he fell when she had led him to say that what he loved in a woman was a noble soul and the devotion which made each day of life a constant happiness; and that after a few years of married life the handsomest of women was no more to a husband than the ugliest. After gathering up what there was of truth in all such paradoxes tending to reduce the value of beauty, Balthazar would suddenly perceive the ungraciousness of his remarks, and show the goodness of his heart by the delicate transitions of thought with which he proved to Mademoiselle de Temninck that she was perfect in his eyes.

The spirit of devotion which, it may be, is the crown

of love in a woman, was not lacking in this young girl, who had always despaired of being loved ; at first, the prospect of a struggle in which feeling and sentiment would triumph over actual beauty tempted her ; then, she fancied a grandeur in giving herself to a man in whose love she did not believe ; finally, she was forced to admit that happiness, however short its duration might be, was too precious to resign.

Such hesitations, such struggles, giving the charm and the unexpectedness of passion to this noble creature, inspired Balthazar with a love that was well-nigh chivalric.

III.

THE marriage took place at the beginning of the year 1795. Husband and wife came to Douai that the first days of their union might be spent in the patriarchal house of the Claës, — the treasures of which were increased by those of Mademoiselle de Temninck, who brought with her several fine pictures of Murillo and Velasquez, the diamonds of her mother, and the magnificent wedding-gifts, made to her by her brother, the Duke of Casa-Réal.

Few women were ever happier than Madame Claës. Her happiness lasted for fifteen years without a cloud, diffusing itself like a vivid light into every nook and detail of her life. Most men have inequalities of character which produce discord, and deprive their households of the harmony which is the ideal of a home ; the majority are blemished with some littleness or meanness, and meanness of any kind begets bickering. One man is honorable and diligent, but hard and crabbed ; another kindly, but obstinate ; this one loves his wife, yet his will is arbitrary and uncertain ; that other, preoccupied by ambition, pays off his affections

as he would a debt, bestows the luxuries of wealth but deprives the daily life of happiness, — in short, the average man of social life is essentially incomplete, without being signally to blame. Men of talent are as variable as barometers ; genius alone is intrinsically good.

For this reason unalloyed happiness is found at the two extremes of the moral scale. The good-natured fool and the man of genius alone are capable — the one through weakness, the other by strength — of that equanimity of temper, that unvarying gentleness, which soften the asperities of daily life. In the one, it is indifference or stolidity ; in the other, indulgence and a portion of the divine thought of which he is the interpreter, and which needs to be consistent alike in principle and application. Both natures are equally simple ; but in one there is vacancy, in the other depth. This is why clever women are disposed to take dull men as the small change for great ones.

Balthazar Claës carried his greatness into the lesser things of life. He delighted in considering conjugal love as a magnificent work ; and like all men of lofty aims who can bear nothing imperfect, he wished to develop all its beauties. His powers of mind enlivened the calm of happiness, his noble nature marked his attentions with the charm of grace. Though he shared the philosophical tenets of the eighteenth century, he installed a chaplain in his home until 1801 (in spite of

the risk he ran from the revolutionary decrees), so that he might not thwart the Spanish fanaticism which his wife had sucked in with her mother's milk : later, when public worship was restored in France, he accompanied her to mass every Sunday. His passion never ceased to be that of a lover. The protecting power, which women like so much, was never exercised by this husband, lest to that wife it might seem pity. He treated her with exquisite flattery as an equal, and sometimes mutinied against her, as men will, as though to brave the supremacy of a pretty woman. His lips wore a smile of happiness, his speech was ever tender ; he loved his Joséphine for herself and for himself, with an ardor that crowned with perpetual praise the qualities and the loveliness of a wife.

Fidelity, often the result of social principle, religious duty, or self-interest on the part of a husband, was in this case involuntary, and not without the sweet flatteries of the spring-time of love. Duty was the only marriage obligation unknown to these lovers, whose love was equal ; for Balthazar Claës found the complete and lasting realization of his hopes in Mademoiselle de Temninck ; his heart was satisfied but not wearied, the man within him was ever happy.

Not only did the daughter of Casa-Réal derive from her Spanish blood the intuition of that science which varies pleasure and makes it infinite, but she possessed

the spirit of unbounded self-devotion, which is the genius of her sex as grace is that of beauty. Her love was a blind fanaticism which, at a nod, would have sent her joyously to her death. Balthazar's own delicacy had exalted the generous emotions of his wife, and inspired her with an imperious need of giving more than she received. This mutual exchange of happiness which each lavished upon the other, put the mainspring of her life visibly outside of her personality, and filled her words, her looks, her actions, with an ever-growing love. Gratitude fertilized and varied the life of each heart; and the certainty of being all in all to one another excluded the paltry things of existence, while it magnified the smallest accessories.

The deformed woman whom her husband thinks straight, the lame woman whom he would not have otherwise, the old woman who seems ever young — are they not the happiest creatures of the feminine world? Can human passion go beyond it? The glory of a woman is to be adored for a defect. To forget that a lame woman does not walk straight may be the glamour of a moment, but to love her because she is lame is the deification of her defects. In the gospel of womanhood it is written: "Blessed are the imperfect, for theirs is the kingdom of Love." If this be so, surely beauty is a misfortune; that fugitive flower counts for too much in the feeling that a woman inspires; often

she is loved for her beauty as another is married for her money. But the love inspired or bestowed by a woman disinherited of the frail advantages pursued by the sons of Adam, is true love, the mysterious passion, the ardent embrace of souls, a sentiment for which the day of disenchantment never comes. That woman has charms unknown to the world, from whose jurisdiction she withdraws herself: she is beautiful with a meaning; her glory lies in making her imperfections forgotten, and thus she constantly succeeds in doing so.

The celebrated attachments of history were nearly all inspired by women in whom the vulgar mind would have found defects, — Cleopatra, Jeanne de Naples, Diane de Poitiers, Mademoiselle de la Vallière, Madame de Pompadour; in fact, the majority of the women whom love has rendered famous were not without infirmities and imperfections, while the greater number of those whose beauty is cited as perfect came to some tragic end of love.

This apparent singularity must have a cause. It may be that man lives more by sentiment than by sense; perhaps the physical charm of beauty is limited, while the moral charm of a woman without beauty is infinite. Is not this the moral of the fable on which the Arabian Nights are based? An ugly wife of Henry VIII. might have defied the axe, and subdued to herself the inconstancy of her master.

By a strange chance, not inexplicable, however, in a girl of Spanish origin, Madame Claës was uneducated. She knew how to read and write, but up to the age of twenty, at which time her parents withdrew her from a convent, she had read none but ascetic books. On her first entrance into the world, she was eager for pleasure and learned only the flimsy art of dress ; she was, moreover, so deeply conscious of her ignorance that she dared not join in conversation ; for which reason she was supposed to have little mind. Yet, the mystical education of a convent had one good result ; it left her feelings in full force and her natural powers of mind uninjured. Stupid and plain as an heiress in the eyes of the world, she became intellectual and beautiful to her husband. During the first years of their married life, Balthazar endeavored to give her at least the knowledge that she needed to appear to advantage in good society : but he was doubtless too late, she had no memory but that of the heart. Joséphine never forgot anything that Claës told her relating to themselves ; she remembered the most trifling circumstances of their happy life ; but of her evening studies nothing remained to her on the morrow.

This ignorance might have caused much discord between husband and wife, but Madame Claës's understanding of the passion of love was so simple and ingenuous, she loved her husband so religiously, so

sacredly, and the thought of preserving her happiness made her so adroit, that she managed always to seem to understand him, and it was seldom indeed that her ignorance was evident. Moreover, when two persons love one another so well that each day seems for them the beginning of their passion, phenomena arise out of this teeming happiness which change all the conditions of life. It resembles childhood, careless of all that is not laughter, joy, and merriment. Then, when life is in full activity, when its hearths glow, man lets the fire burn without thought or discussion, without considering either the means or the end.

No daughter of Eve ever more truly understood the calling of a wife than Madame Claës. She had all the submission of a Flemish woman, but her Spanish pride gave it a higher flavor. Her bearing was imposing; she knew how to command respect by a look which expressed her sense of birth and dignity: but she trembled before Claës; she held him so high, so near to God, carrying to him every act of her life, every thought of her heart, that her love was not without a certain respectful fear which made it keener. She proudly assumed all the habits of a Flemish bourgeoisie, and put her self-love into making the home life liberally happy, — preserving every detail of the house in scrupulous cleanliness, possessing nothing that did not serve the purposes of true comfort, supplying her table with

the choicest food, and putting everything within those walls into harmony with the life of her heart.

The pair had two sons and two daughters. The eldest, Marguerite, was born in 1796. The last child was a boy, now three years old, named Jean-Balthazar. The maternal sentiment in Madame Claës was almost equal to her love for her husband; and there rose in her soul, especially during the last days of her life, a terrible struggle between those nearly balanced feelings, of which the one became, as it were, an enemy of the other. The tears and the terror that marked her face at the moment when this tale of a domestic drama then lowering over the quiet house begins, were caused by the fear of having sacrificed her children to her husband.

In 1805, Madame Claës's brother died without children. The Spanish law does not allow a sister to succeed to territorial possessions, which follow the title; but the duke had left her in his will about sixty thousand ducats, and this sum the heirs of the collateral branch did not seek to retain. Though the feeling which united her to Balthazar Claës was such that no thought of personal interest could ever sully it, Joséphine felt a certain pleasure in possessing a fortune equal to that of her husband, and was happy in giving something to one who had so nobly given everything to her. Thus, a mere chance turned a marriage which worldly

minds had declared foolish, into an excellent alliance, seen from the standpoint of material interests. The use to which this sum of money should be put became, however, somewhat difficult to determine.

The House of Claës was so richly supplied with furniture, pictures, and objects of art of priceless value, that it was difficult to add anything worthy of what was already there. The tastes of the family through long periods of time had accumulated these treasures. One generation followed the quest of noble pictures, leaving behind it the necessity of completing a collection still unfinished; and thus the taste became hereditary in the family. The hundred pictures which adorned the gallery leading from the family building to the reception-rooms on the first floor of the front house, as well as some fifty others placed about the salons, were the product of the patient researches of three centuries. Among them were choice specimens of Rubens, Ruysdael, Vandyke, Terburg, Gerard Dow, Teniers, Mieris, Paul Potter, Wouvermans, Rembrandt, Hobbema, Cranach, and Holbein. French and Italian pictures were in a minority, but all were authentic and masterly.

Another generation had fancied Chinese and Japanese porcelains: this Claës was eager after rare furniture, that one for silver-ware; in fact, each and all had their mania, their passion, — a trait which belongs in

a striking degree to the Flemish character. The father of Balthazar, a last relic of the once famous Dutch society, left behind him the finest known collection of tulips.

Besides these hereditary riches, which represented an enormous capital, and were the choice ornament of the venerable house, — a house that was simple as a shell outside but, like a shell, adorned within by pearls of price and glowing with rich color, — Balthazar Claës possessed a country-house on the plain of Orchies, not far from Douai. Instead of basing his expenses, as Frenchmen do, upon his revenues, he followed the old Dutch custom of spending only a fourth of his income. Twelve hundred ducats a year put his costs of living at a level with those of the richest men of the place. The promulgation of the Civil Code proved the wisdom of this course. Compelling, as it did, the equal division of property, the Title of Succession would some day leave each child with limited means, and disperse the treasures of the Claës collection. Balthazar, therefore, in concert with Madame Claës, invested his wife's property so as to secure to each child a fortune eventually equal to his own. The house of Claës still maintained its moderate scale of living, and bought woodlands somewhat the worse for the wars that had laid waste the country, but which in ten years' time, if well-preserved, would return an enormous value.

The upper ranks of society in Douai, which Monsieur Claës frequented, appreciated so justly the noble character and qualities of his wife that, by tacit consent she was released from those social duties to which the provinces cling so tenaciously. During the winter season, when she lived in town, she seldom went into society; society came to her. She received every Wednesday, and gave three grand dinners every month. Her friends felt that she was more at ease in her own house; where, indeed, her passion for her husband and the care she bestowed on the education of her children tended to keep her.

Such had been, up to the year 1809, the general course of this household, which had nothing in common with the ordinary run of conventional ideas, though the outward life of these two persons, secretly full of love and joy, was like that of other people. Balthazar Claës's passion for his wife, which she had known how to perpetuate, seemed, to use his own expression, to spend its inborn vigor and fidelity on the cultivation of happiness, which was far better than the cultivation of tulips (though to that he had always had a leaning), and dispensed him from the duty of following a mania like his ancestors.

At the close of this year, the mind and the manners of Balthazar Claës underwent a fatal change, — a change which began so gradually that at first Madame

Claës did not think it necessary to inquire the cause. One night her husband went to bed with a mind so preoccupied that she felt it incumbent on her to respect his mood. Her womanly delicacy and her submissive habits always led her to wait for Balthazar's confidence; which, indeed, was assured to her by so constant an affection that she had never had the slightest opening for jealousy. Though certain of obtaining an answer whenever she should make the inquiry, she still retained enough of the earlier impressions of her life to dread a refusal. Besides, the moral malady of her husband had its phases, and only came by slow degrees to the intolerable point at which it destroyed the happiness of the family.

However occupied Balthazar Claës might be, he continued for several months cheerful, affectionate, and ready to talk; the change in his character showed itself only by frequent periods of absent-mindedness. Madame Claës long hoped to hear from her husband himself the nature of the secret employment in which he was engaged; perhaps, she thought, he would reveal it when it developed some useful result; many men are led by pride to conceal the nature of their efforts, and only make them known at the moment of success. When the day of triumph came, surely domestic happiness would return, more vivid than ever when Balthazar became aware of this chasm in the life of love, which

his heart would surely disavow. Joséphine knew her husband well enough to be certain that he would never forgive himself for having made his Pépita less than happy during several months.

She kept silence therefore, and felt a sort of joy in thus suffering by him for him: her passion had a tinge of that Spanish piety which allows no separation between religion and love, and believes in no sentiment without suffering. She waited for the return of her husband's affection, saying daily to herself, "To-morrow it may come," — treating her happiness as though it were an absent friend.

During this stage of her secret distress, she conceived her last child. Horrible crisis, which revealed a future of anguish! In the midst of her husband's abstractions love showed itself on this occasion an abstraction even greater than the rest. Her woman's pride, hurt for the first time, made her sound the depths of the unknown abyss which separated her from the Claës of earlier days. From that time Balthazar's condition grew rapidly worse. The man formerly so wrapped up in his domestic happiness, who played for hours with his children on the parlor carpet or round the garden paths, who seemed able to exist only in the light of his Pépita's dark eyes, did not even perceive her pregnancy, seldom shared the family life, and even forgot his own.

The longer Madame Claës postponed inquiring into the cause of his preoccupation the less she dared to do so. At the very idea, her blood ran cold and her voice grew faint. At last the thought occurred to her that she had ceased to please her husband, and then indeed she was seriously alarmed. That fear now filled her mind, drove her to despair, then to feverish excitement, and became the text of many an hour of melancholy revery. She defended Balthazar at her own expense, calling herself old and ugly ; then she imagined a generous though humiliating consideration for her in this secret occupation by which he secured to her a negative fidelity ; and she resolved to give him back his independence by allowing one of those unspoken divorces which make the happiness of many a marriage.

Before bidding farewell to conjugal life, Madame Claës made some attempt to read her husband's heart, and found it closed. Little by little, she saw him become indifferent to all that he had formerly loved ; he neglected his tulips, he cared no longer for his children. There could be no doubt that he was given over to some passion that was not of the heart, but which, to a woman's mind, is not less withering. His love was dormant, not lost : this might be a consolation, but the misfortune remained the same.

The continuance of such a state of things is explained by one word, — hope, the secret of all con-

jugal situations. It so happened that whenever the poor woman reached a depth of despair which gave her courage to question her husband, she met with a few brief moments of happiness when she was able to feel that if Balthazar were indeed in the clutch of some devilish power, he was permitted, sometimes at least, to return to himself. At such moments, when her heaven brightened, she was too eager to enjoy its happiness to trouble him with importunate questions: later, when she endeavored to speak to him, he would suddenly escape, leave her abruptly, or drop into the gulf of meditation from which no word of hers could drag him.

Before long the reaction of the moral upon the physical condition began its ravages, — at first imperceptibly, except to the eyes of a loving woman following the secret thought of a husband through all its manifestations. Often she could scarcely restrain her tears when she saw him, after dinner, sink into an armchair by the corner of the fireplace, and remain there, gloomy and abstracted. She noted with terror the slow changes which deteriorated that face, once, to her eyes, sublime through love: the life of the soul was retreating from it; the structure remained, but the spirit was gone. Sometimes the eyes were glassy, and seemed as if they had turned their gaze and were looking inward. When the children had gone to bed, and the silence and solitude

oppressed her, Pépita would say, "My friend, are you ill?" and Balthazar would make no answer; or if he answered, he would come to himself with a quiver, like a man snatched suddenly from sleep, and utter a "No" so harsh and grating that it fell like a stone on the palpitating heart of his wife.

Though she tried to hide this strange state of things from her friends, Madame Claës was obliged sometimes to allude to it. The social world of Douai, in accordance with the custom of provincial towns, had made Balthazar's aberrations a topic of conversation, and many persons were aware of certain details that were still unknown to Madame Claës. Disregarding the reticence which politeness demanded, a few friends expressed to her so much anxiety on the subject that she found herself compelled to defend her husband's peculiarities.

"Monsieur Claës," she said, "has undertaken a work which wholly absorbs him; its success will eventually redound not only to the honor of the family but to that of his country."

This mysterious explanation was too flattering to the ambition of a town whose local patriotism and desire for glory exceed those of other places, not to be readily accepted, and it produced on all minds a reaction in favor of Balthazar.

The supposition of his wife was, to a certain extent,

well-founded. Several artificers of various trades had long been at work in the garret of the front house, where Balthazar went early every morning. After remaining, at first, for several hours, an absence to which his wife and household grew gradually accustomed, he ended by being there all day. But—unexpected shock!—Madame Claës learned through the humiliating medium of some women friends, who showed surprise at her ignorance, that her husband constantly imported instruments of physical science, valuable materials, books, machinery, etc., from Paris, and was on the highroad to ruin in search of the Philosophers' Stone. She ought, so her kind friends added, to think of her children, and her own future; it was criminal not to use her influence to draw Monsieur Claës from the fatal path on which he had entered.

Though Madame Claës, with the tone and manner of a great lady, silenced these absurd speeches, she was inwardly terrified in spite of her apparent confidence, and she resolved to break through her present system of silence and resignation. She brought about one of those little scenes in which husband and wife are on an equal footing; less timid at such a moment, she dared to ask Balthazar the reason for his change, the motive of his constant seclusion. The Flemish husband frowned, and replied:—

“My dear, you could not understand it.”

Soon after, however, Joséphine insisted on being told the secret, gently complaining that she was not allowed to share all the thoughts of one whose life she shared.

“Very well, since it interests you so much,” said Balthazar, taking his wife upon his knee and caressing her black hair, “I will tell you that I have returned to the study of chemistry, and I am the happiest man on earth.”

IV.

Two years after the winter when Monsieur Claës returned to chemistry, the aspect of his house was changed. Whether it were that society was affronted by his perpetual absent-mindedness and chose to think itself in the way, or that Madame Claës's secret anxieties made her less agreeable than before, certain it is that she no longer saw any but her intimate friends. Balthazar went nowhere, shut himself up in his laboratory all day, sometimes stayed there all night, and only appeared in the bosom of his family at dinner-time.

After the second year he no longer passed the summer at his country-house, and his wife was unwilling to live there alone. Sometimes he went to walk and did not return till the following day, leaving Madame Claës a prey to mortal anxiety during the night. After causing a fruitless search for him through the town, whose gates, like those of other fortified places, were closed at night, it was impossible to send into the country, and the unhappy woman could only wait and suffer till morning. Balthazar, who had forgotten the hour at which the gates closed, would come tranquilly

home the next day, quite unmindful of the tortures his absence had inflicted on his family; and the happiness of getting him back proved as dangerous an excitement of feeling to his wife as her fears of the preceding night. She kept silence and dared not question him, for when she did so on the occasion of his first absence, he answered with an air of surprise: —

“ Well, what of it? Can I not take a walk? ”

Passions never deceive. Madame Claës's anxieties corroborated the rumors she had taken so much pains to deny. The experience of her youth had taught her to understand the polite pity of the world. Resolved not to undergo it a second time, she withdrew more and more into the privacy of her own house, now deserted by society and even by her nearest friends.

Among these many causes of distress, the negligence and disorder of Balthazar's dress, so degrading to a man of his station, was not the least bitter to a woman accustomed to the exquisite nicety of Flemish life. At first Josephine endeavored, in concert with Balthazar's valet, Lemulquinier, to repair the daily devastation of his clothing, but even that she was soon forced to give up. The very day when Balthazar, unaware of the substitution, put on new clothes in place of those that were stained, torn, or full of holes, he made rags of them.

The poor wife, whose perfect happiness had lasted fifteen years, during which time her jealousy had never

once been roused, was apparently and suddenly nothing in the heart where she had lately reigned. Spanish by race, the feelings of a Spanish woman rose within her when she discovered her rival in a Science that allured her husband from her: torments of jealousy preyed upon her heart and renewed her love. What could she do against Science? Should she combat that tyrannous, unyielding, growing power? Could she kill an invisible rival? Could a woman, limited by nature, contend with an Idea whose delights are infinite, whose attractions are ever new? How make head against the fascination of ideas that spring the fresher and the lovelier out of difficulty, and entice a man so far from this world that he forgets even his dearest loves?

At last one day, in spite of Balthazar's strict orders, Madame Claës resolved to follow him, to shut herself up in the garret where his life was spent, and struggle hand to hand against her rival by sharing her husband's labors during the long hours he gave to that terrible mistress. She determined to slip secretly into the mysterious laboratory of seduction, and obtain the right to be there always. Lemulquinier alone had that right, and she meant to share it with him; but to prevent his witnessing the contention with her husband which she feared at the outset, she waited for an opportunity when the valet should be out of the way. For a while she studied the goings and comings of the man

with angry impatience ; did he not know that which was denied to her — all that her husband hid from her, all that she dared not inquire into? Even a servant was preferred to a wife!

The day came ; she approached the place, trembling, yet almost happy. For the first time in her life she encountered Balthazar's anger. She had hardly opened the door before he sprang upon her, seized her, threw her roughly on the staircase, so that she narrowly escaped rolling to the bottom.

“ God be praised ! you are still alive ! ” he cried, raising her.

A glass vessel had broken into fragments over Madame Claës, who saw her husband standing by her, pale, terrified, and almost livid.

“ My dear, I forbade you to come here,” he said, sitting down on the stairs, as though prostrated. “ The saints have saved your life ! By what chance was it that my eyes were on the door when you opened it? We have just escaped death.”

“ Then I might have been happy ! ” she exclaimed.

“ My experiment has failed,” continued Balthazar. “ You alone could I forgive for that terrible disappointment. I was about to decompose nitrogen. Go back to your own affairs.”

Balthazar re-entered the laboratory and closed the door.

“Decompose nitrogen!” said the poor woman as she re-entered her chamber, and burst into tears.

The phrase was unintelligible to her. Men, trained by education to have a general conception of everything, have no idea how distressing it is for a woman to be unable to comprehend the thought of the man she loves. More forbearing than we, these divine creatures do not let us know when the language of their souls is not understood by us; they shrink from letting us feel the superiority of their feelings, and hide their pain as gladly as they silence their wishes: but, having higher ambitions in love than men, they desire to wed not only the heart of a husband, but his mind.

To Madame Claës the sense of knowing nothing of a science which absorbed her husband filled her with a vexation as keen as the beauty of a rival might have caused. The struggle of woman against woman gives to her who loves the most the advantage of loving best; but a mortification like this only proved Madame Claës’s powerlessness and humiliated the feelings by which she lived. She was ignorant; and she had reached a point where her ignorance parted her from her husband. Worse than all, last and keenest torture, he was risking his life, he was often in danger — near her, yet far away, and she might not share, nor even know, his peril. Her position became, like hell, a moral prison from which there was no issue, in which

there was no hope. Madame Claës resolved to know at least the outward attractions of this fatal science, and she began secretly to study chemistry in the books. From this time the family became, as it were, cloistered.

Such were the successive changes brought by this dire misfortune upon the family of Claës, before it reached the species of atrophy in which we find it at the moment when this history begins.

The situation grew daily more complicated. Like all passionate women, Madame Claës was disinterested. Those who truly love know that considerations of money count for little in matters of feeling and are reluctantly associated with them. Nevertheless, Joséphine did not hear without distress that her husband had borrowed three hundred thousand francs upon his property. The apparent authenticity of the transaction, the rumors and conjectures spread through the town, forced Madame Claës, naturally much alarmed, to question her husband's notary and, disregarding her pride, to reveal to him her secret anxieties or let him guess them, and even ask her the humiliating question, —

“How is it that Monsieur Claës has not told you of this?”

Happily, the notary was almost a relation, — in this wise: The grandfather of Monsieur Claës had married

a Pierquin of Antwerp, of the same family as the Pierquins of Douai. Since the marriage the latter, though strangers to the Claës, claimed them as cousins. Monsieur Pierquin, a young man twenty-six years of age, who had just succeeded to his father's practice, was the only person who now had access to the House of Claës.

Madame Balthazar had lived for several months in such complete solitude that the notary was obliged not only to confirm the rumor of the disasters, but to give her further particulars, which were now well known throughout the town. He told her it was probable that her husband owed considerable sums of money to the house which furnished him with chemicals. That house, after making inquiries as to the fortune and credit of Monsieur Claës, accepted all his orders and sent the supplies without hesitation, notwithstanding the heavy sums of money which became due. Madame Claës requested Pierquin to obtain the bill for all the chemicals that had been furnished to her husband.

Two months later, Messieurs Protez and Chiffreville, manufacturers of chemical products, sent in a schedule of accounts rendered, which amounted to over one hundred thousand francs. Madame Claës and Pierquin studied the document with an ever-increasing surprise. Though some articles, entered in commercial and scientific terms, were unintelligible to them, they were

frightened to see entries of precious metals and diamonds of all kinds, though in small quantities. The large sum total of the debt was explained by the multiplicity of articles, by the precautions needed in transporting some of them, more especially valuable machinery, by the exorbitant price of certain rare chemicals, and finally by the cost of instruments made to order after the designs of Monsieur Claës himself.

The notary had made inquiries, in his client's interest, as to Messieurs Protez and Chiffreville, and found that their known integrity was sufficient guarantee as to the honesty of their operations with Monsieur Claës, to whom, moreover, they frequently sent information of results obtained by chemists in Paris, for the purpose of sparing him expense. Madame Claës begged the notary to keep the nature of these purchases from the knowledge of the people of Douai, lest they should declare the whole thing a mania; but Pierquin replied that he had already delayed to the very last moment the notarial deeds which the importance of the sum borrowed necessitated, in order not to lessen the respect in which Monsieur Claës was held. He then revealed the full extent of the evil, telling her plainly that if she could not find means to prevent her husband from thus madly making way with his property, in six months the patrimonial fortune of the Claës would be mortgaged to its full value. As for himself, he said,

the remonstrances he had already made to his cousin, with all the consideration due to a man so justly respected, had been wholly unavailing. Balthazar had replied, once for all, that he was working for the fame and the fortune of his family.

Thus, to the tortures of the heart which Madame Claës had borne for two years — one following the other with cumulative suffering — was now added a dreadful and ceaseless fear which made the future terrifying. Women have presentiments whose accuracy is often marvellous. Why do they fear so much more than they hope in matters that concern the interests of this life? Why is their faith given only to religious ideas of a future existence? Why do they so ably foresee the catastrophes of fortune and the crises of fate? Perhaps the sentiment which unites them to the men they love gives them a sense by which they weigh force, measure faculties, understand tastes, passions, vices, virtues. The perpetual study of these causes in the midst of which they live gives them, no doubt, the fatal power of foreseeing effects in all possible relations of earthly life. What they see of the present enables them to judge of the future with an intuitive ability explained by the perfection of their nervous system, which allows them to seize the lightest indications of thought and feeling. Their whole being vibrates in communion with great moral convulsions. Either they feel, or they see.

Now, although separated from her husband for over two years, Madame Claës foresaw the loss of their property. She fully understood the deliberate ardor, the well-considered, inalterable steadfastness of Balthazar ; if it were indeed true that he was seeking to make gold, he was capable of throwing his last crust into the crucible with absolute indifference. But what was he really seeking? Up to this time maternal feeling and conjugal love had been so mingled in the heart of this woman that the children, equally beloved by husband and wife, had never come between them. Suddenly she found herself at times more mother than wife, though hitherto she had been more wife than mother. However ready she had been to sacrifice her fortune and even her children to the man who had chosen her, loved her, adored her, and to whom she was still the only woman in the world, the remorse she felt for the weakness of her maternal love threw her into terrible alternations of feeling. As a wife, she suffered in heart ; as a mother, through her children ; as a Christian, for all.

She kept silence, and hid the cruel struggle in her soul. Her husband, sole arbiter of the family fate, was the master by whose will it must be guided ; he was responsible to God only. Besides, could she reproach him for the use he now made of his fortune, after the disinterestedness he had shown to her for many happy years? Was she to judge his purposes? And yet her

conscience, in keeping with the spirit of the law, told her that parents were the depositaries and guardians of property, and possessed no right to alienate the material welfare of the children. To escape replying to such stern questions she preferred to shut her eyes, like one who refuses to see the abyss into whose depths he knows he is about to fall.

For more than six months her husband had given her no money for the household expenses. She sold secretly, in Paris, the handsome diamond ornaments her brother had given her on her marriage, and placed the family on a footing of the strictest economy. She sent away the governess of her children, and even the nurse of little Jean. Formerly the luxury of carriages and horses was unknown among the burgher families, so simple were they in their habits, so proud in their feelings; no provision for that modern innovation had therefore been made at the House of Claës, and Balthazar was obliged to have his stable and coachhouse in a building opposite to his own house: his present occupations allowed him no time to superintend that portion of his establishment, which belongs exclusively to men. Madame Claës suppressed the whole expense of equipages and servants, which her present isolation from the world rendered unnecessary, and she did so without pretending to conceal the retrenchment under any pretext. So far, facts had contradicted her

assertions, and silence for the future was more becoming: indeed the change in the family mode of living called for no explanation in a country where, as in Flanders, any one who lives up to his income is considered a madman.

And yet, as her eldest daughter, Marguerite, approached her sixteenth birthday, Madame Claës longed to procure for her a good marriage, and to place her in society in a manner suitable to a daughter of the Molinas, the Van Ostrom-Temnincks, and the Casa-Réals. A few days before the one on which this story opens, the money derived from the sale of the diamonds had been exhausted. On the very day, at three o'clock in the afternoon, as Madame Claës was taking her children to vespers, she met Pierquin, who was on his way to see her, and who turned and accompanied her to the church, talking in a low voice of her situation.

“My dear cousin,” he said, “unless I fail in the friendship which binds me to your family, I cannot conceal from you the peril of your position, or refrain from begging you to speak to your husband. Who but you can hold him back from the gulf into which he is plunging? The rents from the mortgaged estates are not enough to pay the interest on the sums he has borrowed. If he cuts the wood on them he destroys your last chance of safety in the future. My cousin Balthazar owes at this moment thirty thousand francs to the

house of Protez and Chiffreville. How can you pay them? What will you live on? If Claës persists in sending for reagents, retorts, voltaic batteries, and other such playthings, what will become of you? Your whole property, except the house and furniture, has been dissipated in gas and carbon; yesterday he talked of mortgaging the house, and in answer to a remark of mine, he cried out, ‘The devil!’ It was the first sign of reason I have known him show for three years.”

Madame Claës pressed the notary’s arm, and said in a tone of suffering, “Keep it secret.”

Overwhelmed by these plain words of startling clearness, the poor woman, pious as she was, could not pray; she sat still on her chair between her children, with her prayer-book open, but not turning its leaves; her mind was sunk in meditations as absorbing as those of her husband. The Spanish sense of honor, the Flemish integrity, resounded in her soul with a peal louder than any organ. The ruin of her children was accomplished! Between them and their father’s honor she must no longer hesitate. The necessity of a coming struggle with her husband terrified her; in her eyes he was so great, so majestic, that the mere prospect of his anger made her tremble as at a vision of the divine wrath. She must now depart from the submission she had sacredly practised as a wife. The interests of her children compelled her to oppose, in his most cherished

tastes, the man she idolized. Must she not daily force him back to common matters from the higher realms of Science; drag him forcibly from a smiling future and plunge him into a materialism hideous to artists and great men? To her, Balthazar Claës was a Titan of science, a man big with glory; he could only have forgotten her for the riches of a mighty hope. Then too, was he not profoundly wise? she had heard him talk with such good sense on every subject that he must be sincere when he declared he worked for the glory and prosperity of his family. His love for his wife and family was not only vast, it was infinite. That feeling could not be extinct; it was magnified, and reproduced in another form.

Noble, generous, timid as she was, she prepared herself to ring into the ears of this noble man the word and the sound of money, to show him the sores of poverty, and force him to hear cries of distress when he was listening only for the melodious voice of Fame. Perhaps his love for her would lessen! If she had had no children, she would bravely and joyously have welcomed the new destiny her husband was making for her. Women who are brought up in opulence are quick to feel the emptiness of material enjoyments; and when their hearts, more wearied than withered, have once learned the happiness of a constant interchange of real feelings, they feel no shrinking from reduced outward

circumstances, provided they are still acceptable to the man who has loved them. Their wishes, their pleasures, are subordinated to the caprices of that other life outside of their own; to them the only dreadful future is to lose him.

At this moment, therefore, her children came between Pépita and her true life, just as Science had come between herself and Balthazar. And thus, when she reached home after vespers, and threw herself into the deep armchair before the window of the parlor, she sent away her children, directing them to keep perfectly quiet, and despatched a message to her husband, through Lemulquinier, saying that she wished to see him. But although the old valet did his best to make his master leave the laboratory, Balthazar scarcely heeded him. Madame Claës thus gained time for reflection. She sat thinking, paying no attention to the hour nor the light. The thought of owing thirty thousand francs that could not be paid renewed her past anguish and joined it to that of the present and the future. This influx of painful interests, ideas, and feelings overcame her, and she wept.

As Balthazar entered at last through the panelled door, the expression of his face seemed to her more dreadful, more absorbed, more distracted than she had yet seen it. When he made her no answer she was magnetized for a moment by the fixity of that blank

look emptied of all expression, by the consuming ideas that issued as if distilled from that bald brow. Under the shock of this impression she wished to die. But when she heard the callous voice, uttering a scientific wish at the moment when her heart was breaking, her courage came back to her; she resolved to struggle with that awful power which had torn a lover from her arms, a father from her children, a fortune from their home, happiness from all. And yet she could not repress a trepidation which made her quiver; in all her life no such solemn scene as this had taken place. This dreadful moment — did it not virtually contain her future, and gather within it all the past?

Weak and timid persons, or those whose excessive sensibility magnifies the smallest difficulties of life, men who tremble involuntarily before the masters of their fate, can now, one and all, conceive the rush of thoughts that crowded into the brain of this woman, and the feelings under the weight of which her heart was crushed as her husband slowly crossed the room towards the garden-door. Most women know that agony of inward deliberation in which Madame Claës was writhing. Even one whose heart has been tried by nothing worse than the declaration to a husband of some extravagance, or a debt to a dress-maker, will understand how its pulses swell and quicken when the matter is one of life itself.

A beautiful or graceful woman might have thrown herself at her husband's feet, might have called to her aid the attitudes of grief; but to Madame Claës the sense of physical defects only added to her fears. When she saw Balthazar about to leave the room, her impulse was to spring towards him; then a cruel thought restrained her — she should stand before him! would she not seem ridiculous in the eyes of a man no longer under the glamour of love — who might see true? She resolved to avoid all dangerous chances at so solemn a moment, and remained seated, saying in a clear voice,

“Balthazar.”

He turned mechanically and coughed; then, paying no attention to his wife, he walked to one of the little square boxes that are placed at intervals along the wainscoting of every room in Holland and Belgium, and spat in it. This man, who took no thought of other persons, never forgot the inveterate habit of using those boxes. To poor Joséphine, unable to find a reason for this singularity, the constant care which her husband took of the furniture caused her at all times an unspeakable pang, but at this moment the pain was so violent that it put her beside herself and made her exclaim in a tone of impatience, which expressed her wounded feelings, —

“Monsieur, I am speaking to you!”

“What does that mean?” answered Balthazar, turning quickly, and casting a look of reviving intelligence upon his wife, which fell upon her like a thunderbolt.

“Forgive me, my friend,” she said, turning pale. She tried to rise and put out her hand to him, but her strength gave way and she fell back. “I am dying!” she cried in a voice choked by sobs.

At the sight Balthazar had, like all abstracted persons, a vivid reaction of mind; and he divined, so to speak, the secret cause of this attack. Taking Madame Claës at once in his arms, he opened the door upon the little antechamber, and ran so rapidly up the ancient wooden staircase that his wife’s dress having caught on the jaws of one of the griffins that supported the balustrade, a whole breadth was torn off with a loud noise. He kicked in the door of the vestibule between their chambers, but the door of Joséphine’s bedroom was locked.

He gently placed her on a chair, saying to himself, “My God! the key, where is the key?”

“Thank you, dear friend,” said Madame Claës, opening her eyes. “This is the first time for a long, long while that I have been so near your heart.”

“Good God!” cried Claës, “the key! — here come the servants.”

Joséphine signed to him to take a key that hung from a ribbon at her waist. After opening the door,

Balthazar laid his wife on a sofa, and left the room to stop the frightened servants from coming up by giving them orders to serve the dinner; he then went back to Madame Claës.

“What is it, my dear life?” he said, sitting down beside her, and taking her hand and kissing it.

“Nothing — now,” she answered. “I suffer no longer. Only, I would I had the power of God to pour all the gold of the world at thy feet.”

“Why gold?” he asked. He took her in his arms, pressed her to him and kissed her once more upon the forehead. “Do you not give me the greatest of all riches in loving me as you do love me, my dear and precious wife?”

“Oh! my Balthazar, will you not drive away the anguish of our lives as your voice now drives out the misery of my heart? At last, at last, I see that you are still the same.”

“What anguish do you speak of, dear?”

“My friend, we are ruined.”

“Ruined!” he repeated. Then, with a smile, he stroked her hand, holding it within his own, and said in his tender voice, so long unheard: “To-morrow, dear love, our wealth may perhaps be limitless. Yesterday, in searching for a far more important secret, I think I found the means of crystallizing carbon, the substance of the diamond. Oh, my dear wife! in a few

days' time you will forgive me all my forgetfulness — I am forgetful sometimes, am I not? Was I not harsh to you just now? Be indulgent for a man who never ceases to think of you, whose toils are full of you — of us."

"Enough, enough!" she said, "let us talk of it all to-night, dear friend. I suffered from too much grief, and now I suffer from too much joy."

"To-night," he resumed; "yes, willingly: we will talk of it. If I fall into meditation, remind me of this promise. To-night I desire to leave my work, my researches, and return to family joys, to the delights of the heart — Pépita, I need them, I thirst for them!"

"You will tell me what it is you seek, Balthazar?"

"Poor child, you cannot understand it."

"You think so? Ah! my friend, listen; for nearly four months I have studied chemistry that I might talk of it with you. I have read Fourcroy, Lavoisier, Chaptal, Nollet, Rouelle, Berthollet, Gay-Lussac, Spallanzani, Leuwenhoëk, Galvani, Volta, — in fact, all the books about the science you worship. You can tell me your secrets, I shall understand you."

"Oh! you are indeed an angel," cried Balthazar, falling at her feet, and shedding tears of tender feeling that made her quiver. "Yes, we will understand each other in all things."

"Ah!" she cried, "I would throw myself into those hellish fires which heat your furnaces to hear these

words from your lips and to see you thus." Then, hearing her daughter's step in the anteroom, she sprang quickly forward. "What is it, Marguerite?" she said to her eldest daughter.

"My dear mother, Monsieur Pierquin has just come. If he stays to dinner we need some table-linen; you forgot to give it out this morning."

Madame Claës drew from her pocket a bunch of small keys and gave them to the young girl, pointing to the mahogany closets which lined the ante-chamber as she said:

"My daughter, take a set of the Graindorge linen; it is on your right."

"Since my dear Balthazar comes back to me, let the return be complete," she said, re-entering her chamber with a soft and arch expression upon her face. "My friend, go into your own room; do me the kindness to dress for dinner, Pierquin will be with us. Come, take off this ragged clothing; see those stains! Is it muriatic or sulphuric acid which left these yellow edges to the holes? Make yourself young again,—I will send you Mulquinier as soon as I have changed my dress."

Balthazar attempted to pass through the door of communication, forgetting that it was locked on his side. He went out through the anteroom.

"Marguerite, put the linen on a chair, and come and help me dress; I don't want Martha," said Madame Claës, calling her daughter.

Balthazar had caught Marguerite and turned her towards him with a joyous action, exclaiming: "Good-evening, my child; how pretty you are in your muslin gown and that pink sash!" Then he kissed her forehead and pressed her hand.

"Mamma, papa has kissed me!" cried Marguerite, running into her mother's room. "He seems so joyous, so happy!"

"My child, your father is a great man; for three years he has toiled for the fame and fortune of his family: he thinks he has attained the object of his search. This day is a festival for us all."

"My dear mamma," replied Marguerite, "we shall not be alone in our joy, for the servants have been so grieved to see him unlike himself. Oh! put on another sash, this is faded."

"So be it; but make haste, I want to speak to Pierquin. Where is he?"

"In the parlor, playing with Jean."

"Where are Gabriel and Félicie?"

"I hear them in the garden."

"Run down quickly and see that they do not pick the tulips; your father has not seen them in flower this year, and he may take a fancy to look at them after dinner. Tell Mulquinier to go up and assist your father in dressing."

V.

As Marguerite left the room, Madame Claës glanced at the children through the windows of her chamber, which looked on the garden, and saw that they were watching one of those insects with shining wings spotted with gold, commonly called “darning-needles.”

“Be good, my darlings,” she said, raising the lower sash of the window and leaving it up to air the room. Then she knocked gently on the door of communication, to assure herself that Balthazar had not fallen into abstraction. He opened it, and seeing him half-dressed, she said in joyous tones:—

“You won’t leave me long with Pierquin, will you? Come as soon as you can.”

Her step was so light as she descended that a listener would never have supposed her lame.

“When monsieur carried madame upstairs,” said the old valet, whom she met on the staircase, “he tore this bit out of her dress, and he broke the jaw of that griffin; I’m sure I don’t know who can put it on again. There’s our staircase ruined—and it used to be so handsome!”

“Never mind, my poor Mulquinier; don’t have it mended at all—it is not a misfortune,” said his mistress.

“What can have happened?” thought Lemulquinier; “why is n’t it a misfortune, I should like to know? has the master found the Absolute?”

“Good-evening, Monsieur Pierquin,” said Madame Claës, opening the parlor door.

The notary rushed forward to give her his arm; as she never took any but that of her husband she thanked him with a smile and said, —

“Have you come for the thirty thousand francs?”

“Yes, madame; when I reached home I found a letter of advice from Messieurs Protez and Chiffreville, who have drawn six letters of exchange upon Monsieur Claës for five thousand francs each.”

“Well, say nothing to Balthazar to-day,” she replied. “Stay and dine with us. If he happens to ask why you came, find some plausible pretext, I entreat you. Give me the letter. I will speak to him myself about it. All is well,” she added, noticing the lawyer’s surprise. “In a few months my husband will probably pay off all the sums he has borrowed.”

Hearing these words, which were said in a low voice, the notary looked at Mademoiselle Claës, who was entering the room from the garden followed by Gabriel and Félicie, and remarked, —

“I have never seen Mademoiselle Marguerite as pretty as she is at this moment.”

Madame Claës, who was sitting in her armchair with little Jean upon her lap, raised her head and looked at her daughter, and then at the notary, with a pretended air of indifference.

Pierquin was a man of middle height, neither stout nor thin, with vulgar good looks, a face that expressed vexation rather than melancholy, and a pensive habit in which there was more of indecision than thought. People called him a misanthrope, but he was too eager after his own interests, and too extortionate towards others to have set up a genuine divorce from the world. His indifferent demeanor, his affected silence, his habitual custom of looking, as it were, into the void, seemed to indicate depth of character, while in fact they merely concealed the shallow insignificance of a notary busied exclusively with earthly interests; though he was still young enough to feel envy. To marry into the family of Claës would have been to him an object of extreme desire, if an instinct of avarice had not underlain it. He could seem generous, but for all that he was a keen reckoner. And thus, without explaining to himself the motive for his change of manner, his behavior was harsh, peremptory, and surly, like that of an ordinary business man, when he thought the Claës were ruined; accommodating, affectionate, and almost servile, when

he saw reason to believe in a happy issue to his cousin's labors. Sometimes he beheld an infant in Marguerite Claës, to whom no provincial notary might aspire ; then he regarded her as any poor girl too happy if he deigned to make her his wife. He was a true provincial, and a Fleming ; without malevolence, not devoid of devotion and kindheartedness, but led by a naïve selfishness which rendered all his better qualities incomplete, while certain absurdities of manner spoiled his personal appearance.

Madame Claës recollected the curt tone in which the notary had spoken to her that afternoon in the porch of the church, and she took note of the change which her present reply had wrought in his demeanor ; she guessed its meaning and tried to read her daughter's mind by a penetrating glance, seeking to discover if she thought of her cousin ; but the young girl's manner showed complete indifference.

After a few moments spent in general conversation on the current topics of the day, the master of the house came down from his bedroom, where his wife had heard with inexpressible delight the creaking sound of his boots as he trod the floor. The step was that of a young and active man, and foretold so complete a transformation, that the mere expectation of his appearance made Madame Claës quiver as he descended the stairs. Balthazar entered, dressed in the fashion of the period.

He wore highly polished top-boots, which allowed the upper part of the white silk stockings to appear, blue kerseymere small-clothes with gold buttons, a flowered white waistcoat, and a blue frock-coat. He had trimmed his beard, combed and perfumed his hair, pared his nails, and washed his hands, all with such care that he was scarcely recognizable to those who had seen him lately. Instead of an old man almost decrepit, his children, his wife, and the notary saw a Balthazar Claës who was forty years old, and whose courteous and affable presence was full of its former attractions. The weariness and suffering betrayed by the thin face and the clinging of the skin to the bones, had in themselves a sort of charm.

“Good-evening, Pierquin,” said Monsieur Claës.

Once more a husband and a father, he took his youngest child from his wife’s lap and tossed him in the air.

“See that little fellow!” he exclaimed to the notary. “Doesn’t such a pretty creature make you long to marry? Take my word for it, my dear Pierquin, family happiness consoles a man for everything. Up, up!” he cried, tossing Jean in the air; “down, down! up! down!”

The child laughed with all his heart as he went alternately to the ceiling and down to the carpet. The mother turned away her eyes that she might not betray

the emotion which the simple play caused her, — simple apparently, but to her a domestic revolution.

“Let me see how you can walk,” said Balthazar, putting his son on the floor and throwing himself on a sofa near his wife.

The child ran to its father, attracted by the glitter of the gold buttons which fastened the breeches just above the slashed tops of his boots.

“You are a darling!” cried Balthazar, kissing him; “you are a Claës, you walk straight. Well, Gabriel, how is Père Morillon?” he said to his eldest son, taking him by the ear and twisting it. “Are you struggling valiantly with your themes and your construing? have you taken sharp hold of mathematics?”

Then he rose, and went up to the notary with the affectionate courtesy that characterized him.

“My dear Pierquin,” he said, “perhaps you have something to say to me.” He took his arm to lead him to the garden, adding, “Come and see my tulips.”

Madame Claës looked at her husband as he left the room, unable to repress the joy she felt in seeing him once more so young, so affable, so truly himself. She rose, took her daughter round the waist and kissed her, exclaiming: —

“My dear Marguerite, my darling child! I love you better than ever to-day.”

“It is long since I have seen my father so kind,” answered the young girl.

Lemulquinier announced dinner. To prevent Pierquin from offering her his arm, Madame Claës took that of her husband and led the way into the next room, the whole family following.

The dining-room, whose ceiling was supported by beams and decorated with paintings cleaned and restored every year, was furnished with tall oaken sideboards and buffets, on whose shelves stood many a curious piece of family china. The walls were hung with violet leather, on which designs of game and other hunting objects were stamped in gold. Carefully arranged here and there above the shelves, shone the brilliant plumage of strange birds, and the lustre of rare shells. The chairs, which evidently had not been changed since the beginning of the sixteenth century, showed the square shape with twisted columns and the low back covered with a fringed stuff, common to that period, and glorified by Raphael in his picture of the *Madonna della Sedia*. The wood of these chairs was now black, but the gilt nails shone as if new, and the stuff, carefully renewed from time to time, was of an admirable shade of red.

The whole life of Flanders with its Spanish innovations was in this room. The decanters and flasks on the dinner-table, with their graceful antique lines and

swelling curves, had an air of respectability. The glasses were those old goblets with stems and feet which may be seen in the pictures of the Dutch or Flemish school. The dinner-service of faiënce, decorated with raised colored figures, in the manner of Bernard Palissy, came from the English manufactory of Wedgwood. The silver-ware was massive, with square sides and designs in high relief, — genuine family plate, whose pieces, in every variety of form, fashion, and chasing, showed the beginnings of prosperity and the progress towards fortune of the Claës family. The napkins were fringed, a fashion altogether Spanish; and as for the linen, it will readily be supposed that the Claës's household made it a point of honor to possess the best.

All this service of the table, silver, linen, and glass, were for the daily use of the family. The front house, where the social entertainments were given, had its own especial luxury, whose marvels, being reserved for great occasions, wore an air of dignity often lost to things which are, as it were, made common by daily use. Here, in the home quarter, everything bore the impress of patriarchal use and simplicity. And — for a final and delightful detail — a vine grew outside the house between the windows, whose tendrilled branches twined about the casements.

“You are faithful to the old traditions, madame,” said Pierquin, as he received a plate of that celebrated

thyme soup in which the Dutch and Flemish cooks put little force-meat balls and dice of fried bread. “This is the Sunday soup of our forefathers. Your house and that of my uncle des Raquets are the only ones where we still find this historic soup of the Netherlands. Ah! pardon me, old Monsieur Savaron de Savarus of Tournai makes it a matter of pride to keep up the custom; but everywhere else old Flanders is disappearing. Now-a-days everything is changing; furniture is made from Greek models; wherever you go you see helmets, lances, shields, and bows and arrows! Everybody is rebuilding his house, selling his old furniture, melting up his silver dishes, or exchanging them for Sèvres porcelain, — which does not compare with either old Dresden or with Chinese ware. Oh! as for me, I’m Flemish to the core; my heart actually bleeds to see the coppersmiths buying up our beautiful inlaid furniture for the mere value of the wood and the metal. The fact is, society wants to change its skin. Everything is being sacrificed, even the old methods of art. When people insist on going so fast, nothing is conscientiously done. During my last visit to Paris I was taken to see the pictures in the Louvre. On my word of honor, they are mere screen-painting, — no depth, no atmosphere; the painters were actually afraid to put colors on their canvas. And it is they who talk of overturning our ancient school of art! Ah, bah! —”

“Our old masters,” replied Balthazar, “studied the combination of colors and their endurance by submitting them to the action of sun and rain. You are right enough, however; the material resources of art are less cultivated in these days than formerly.”

Madame Claës was not listening to the conversation. The notary’s remark that porcelain dinner-services were now the fashion, gave her the brilliant idea of selling a quantity of heavy silver-ware which she had inherited from her brother, — hoping to be able thus to pay off the thirty thousand francs which her husband owed.

“Ha! ha!” Balthazar was saying to Pierquin when Madame Claës’s mind returned to the conversation, “so they are discussing my work in Douai, are they?”

“Yes,” replied the notary, “every one is asking what it is you spend so much money on. Only yesterday I heard the chief-justice deploring that a man like you should be searching for the Philosopher’s stone. I ventured to reply that you were too wise not to know that such a scheme was attempting the impossible, too much of a Christian to take God’s work out of his hands; and, like every other Claës, too good a business man to spend your money for such befooling quackeries. Still, I admit that I share the regret people feel at your absence from society. You might as well not live here at all. Really, madame, you would

have been delighted had you heard the praises showered on Monsieur Claës and on you."

"You acted like a faithful friend in repelling imputations whose least evil is to make me ridiculous," said Balthazar. "Ha ! so they think me ruined? Well, my dear Pierquin, two months hence I shall give a fête in honor of my wedding-day whose magnificence will get me back the respect my dear townsmen bestow on wealth."

Madame Claës colored deeply. For two years the anniversary had been forgotten. Like madmen whose faculties shine at times with unwonted brilliancy, Balthazar was never more gracious and delightful in his tenderness than at this moment. He was full of attention to his children, and his conversation had the charms of grace, and wit, and pertinence. This return of fatherly feeling, so long absent, was certainly the truest fête he could give his wife, for whom his looks and words expressed once more that unbroken sympathy of heart for heart which reveals to each a delicious oneness of sentiment.

Old Lemulquinier seemed to renew his youth ; he came and went about the table with unusual liveliness, caused by the accomplishment of his secret hopes. The sudden change in his master's ways was even more significant to him than to Madame Claës. Where the family saw happiness he saw fortune. While helping

Balthazar in his experiments he had grown to share his beliefs. Whether he really understood the drift of his master's researches from certain exclamations which escaped the chemist when expected results disappointed him, or whether the innate tendency of mankind towards imitation made him adopt the ideas of the man in whose atmosphere he lived, certain it is that Lemulquinier had conceived for his master a superstitious feeling that was a mixture of terror, admiration, and selfishness. The laboratory was to him what a lottery-office is to the masses, — organized hope. Every night he went to bed saying to himself, "To-morrow we may float in gold;" and every morning he woke with a faith as firm as that of the night before.

His name proved that his origin was wholly Flemish. In former days the lower classes were known by some name or nickname derived from their trades, their surroundings, their physical conformation, or their moral qualities. This name became the patronymic of the burgher family which each established as soon as he obtained his freedom. Sellers of linen thread were called in Flanders "*mulquiniers*;" and that no doubt was the trade of the particular ancestor of the old valet who passed from a state of serfdom to one of burgher dignity, until some unknown misfortune had again reduced his present descendant to the condition of a serf, with the addition of wages. The whole history of

Flanders and its linen-trade was epitomized in this old man, often called, by way of euphony, Mulquinier. He was not without originality, either of character or appearance. His face was triangular in shape, broad and long, and seamed by small-pox which had left innumerable white and shining patches that gave him a fantastic appearance. He was tall and thin; his whole demeanor solemn and mysterious; and his small eyes, yellow as the wig which was smoothly plastered on his head, cast none but oblique glances.

The old valet's outward man was in keeping with the feeling of curiosity which he everywhere inspired. His position as assistant to his master, the depositary of a secret jealously guarded and about which he maintained a rigid silence, invested him with a species of charm. The denizens of the rue de Paris watched him pass with an interest mingled with awe; to all their questions he returned sibylline answers big with mysterious treasures. Proud of being necessary to his master, he assumed an annoying authority over his companions, employing it to further his own interests and compel a submission which made him virtually the ruler of the house. Contrary to the custom of Flemish servants, who are deeply attached to the families whom they serve, Mulquinier cared only for Balthazar. If any trouble befel Madame Claës, or any joyful event happened to the family, he ate his

bread and butter and drank his beer as phlegmatically as ever.

Dinner over, Madame Claës proposed that coffee should be served in the garden, by the bed of tulips which adorned the centre of it. The earthenware pots in which the bulbs were grown (the name of each flower being engraved on slate labels) were sunk in the ground and so arranged as to form a pyramid, at the summit of which rose a certain dragon's-head tulip which Balthazar alone possessed. This flower, named *tulipa Claësiana*, combined the seven colors; and the curved edges of each petal looked as though they were gilt. Balthazar's father, who had frequently refused ten thousand florins for this treasure, took such precautions against the theft of a single seed that he kept the plant always in the parlor and often spent whole days in contemplating it. The stem was enormous, erect, firm, and admirably green; the proportions of the plant were in harmony with the proportions of the flower, whose seven colors were distinguishable from each other with the clearly defined brilliancy which formerly gave such fabulous value to these dazzling plants.

"Here you have at least thirty or forty thousand francs' worth of tulips," said the notary, looking alternately at Madame Claës and at the many-colored pyramid. The former was too enthusiastic over the beauty of the flowers, which the setting sun was just then

transforming into jewels, to observe the meaning of the notary's words.

“What good do they do you?” continued Pierquin, addressing Balthazar; “you ought to sell them.”

“Bah! am I in want of money?” replied Claës, in the tone of a man to whom forty thousand francs was a matter of no consequence.

There was a moment's silence, during which the children made many exclamations.

“See this one, mamma!”

“Oh! here's a beauty!”

“Tell me the name of that one!”

“What a gulf for human reason to sound!” cried Balthazar, raising his hands and clasping them with a gesture of despair. “A compound of hydrogen and oxygen gives off, according to their relative proportions, under the same conditions and by the same principle, these manifold colors, each of which constitutes a distinct result.”

His wife heard the words of his proposition, but it was uttered so rapidly that she did not seize its exact meaning; and Balthazar, as if remembering that she had studied his favorite science, made her a mysterious sign, saying, —

“You do not yet understand me, but you will.”

Then he apparently fell back into the absorbed meditation now habitual to him.

“No, I am sure you do not understand him,” said Pierquin, taking his coffee from Marguerite’s hand. “The Ethiopian can’t change his skin, nor the leopard his spots,” he whispered to Madame Claës. “Have the goodness to remonstrate with him later; the devil himself could n’t draw him out of his cogitation now; he is in it for to-day, at any rate.”

So saying, he bade good-by to Claës, who pretended not to hear him, kissed little Jean in his mother’s arms, and retired with a low bow.

When the street-door clanged behind him, Balthazar caught his wife round the waist, and put an end to the uneasiness his feigned revery was causing her by whispering in her ear, —

“I knew how to get rid of him.”

Madame Claës turned her face to her husband, not ashamed to let him see the tears of happiness that filled her eyes: then she rested her forehead against his shoulder and let little Jean slide to the floor.

“Let us go back into the parlor,” she said, after a pause.

Balthazar was exuberantly gay throughout the evening. He invented games for the children, and played with such zest himself that he did not notice two or three short absences made by his wife. About half-past nine, when Jean had gone to bed, Marguerite returned to the parlor after helping her sister Félicie

to undress, and found her mother seated in the deep armchair, and her father holding his wife's hand as he talked to her. The young girl feared to disturb them, and was about to retire without speaking, when Madame Claës caught sight of her, and said : —

“Come in, Marguerite ; come here, dear child.” She drew her down, kissed her tenderly on the forehead, and added, “Carry your book into your own room ; but do not sit up too late.”

“Good-night, my darling daughter,” said Balthazar.

Marguerite kissed her father and mother and went away. Husband and wife remained alone for some minutes without speaking, watching the last glimmer of the twilight as it faded from the trees in the garden, whose outlines were scarcely discernible through the gathering darkness. When night had almost fallen, Balthazar said to his wife in a voice of emotion, —

“Let us go upstairs.”

Long before English manners and customs had consecrated the wife's chamber as a sacred spot, that of a Flemish woman was impenetrable. The good housewives of the Low Countries did not make it a symbol of virtue. It was to them a habit contracted from childhood, a domestic superstition, rendering the bedroom a delightful sanctuary of tender feelings, where simplicity blended with all that was most sweet and sacred in

social life. Any woman in Madame Claës's position would have wished to gather about her the elegances of life, but Joséphine had done so with exquisite taste, knowing well how great an influence the aspect of our surroundings exerts upon the feelings of others. To a pretty creature it would have been mere luxury, to her it was a necessity. No one better understood the meaning of the saying, "A pretty woman is self-created," — a maxim which guided every action of Napoleon's first wife, and often made her false; whereas Madame Claës was ever natural and true.

Though Balthazar knew his wife's chamber well, his forgetfulness of material things had lately been so complete that he felt a thrill of soft emotion when he entered it, as though he saw it for the first time. The proud gayety of a triumphant woman glowed in the splendid colors of the tulips which rose from the long throats of Chinese vases judiciously placed about the room, and sparkled in the profusion of lights whose effect can only be compared to a joyous burst of martial music. The gleam of the wax candles cast a mellow sheen on the coverings of pearl-gray silk, whose monotony was relieved by touches of gold, soberly distributed here and there on a few ornaments, and by the varied colors of the tulips, which were like sheaves of precious stones. The secret of this choice arrangement — it was he, ever he! Joséphine could not tell him in words more

eloquent that he was now and ever the mainspring of her joys and woes.

The aspect of that chamber put the soul deliciously at ease, cast out sad thoughts, and left a sense of pure and equable happiness. The silken coverings, brought from China, gave forth a soothing perfume that penetrated the system without fatiguing it. The curtains, carefully drawn, betrayed a desire for solitude, a jealous intention of guarding the sound of every word, of hiding every look of the reconquered husband. Madame Claës, wearing a dressing-robe of muslin, which was trimmed by a long pelerine with falls of lace that came about her throat, and adorned with her beautiful black hair, which was exquisitely glossy and fell on either side her forehead like a raven's wing, went to draw the tapestry portière that hung before the door and allowed no sound to penetrate the chamber from without.

VI.

AT the doorway Joséphine turned, and threw to her husband, who was sitting near the chimney, one of those gay smiles with which a sensitive woman whose soul comes at moments into her face, rendering it beautiful, gives expression to irresistible hopes. Woman's greatest charm lies in her constant appeal to the generosity of man by the admission of a weakness which stirs his pride and wakens him to the nobler sentiments. Is not such an avowal of weakness full of magical seduction? When the rings of the portière had slipped with a muffled sound along the wooden rod, she turned towards Claës, and made as though she would hide her physical defects by resting her hand upon a chair and drawing herself gracefully forward. It was calling him to help her. Balthazar, sunk for a moment in contemplation of the olive-tinted head, which attracted and satisfied the eye as it stood out in relief against the soft gray background, rose to take his wife in his arms and carry her to her sofa. 'This was what she wanted.

"You promised me," she said, taking his hand which she held between her own magnetic palms, "to tell me

the secret of your researches. Admit, dear friend, that I am worthy to know it, since I have had the courage to study a science condemned by the Church that I might be able to understand you. I am curious; hide nothing from me. Tell me first how it happened that you rose one morning anxious and oppressed, when over night I had left you happy."

"Is it to hear me talk of chemistry that you have made yourself so coquettishly delightful?"

"Dear friend, a confidence which puts me in your inner heart is the greatest of all pleasures for me; is it not a communion of souls which gives birth to the highest happiness of earth? Your love comes back to me not lessened, pure; I long to know what dream has had the power to keep it from me so long. Yes, I am more jealous of a thought than of all the women in the world. Love is vast, but it is not infinite, while Science has depths unfathomed, to which I will not let you go alone. I hate all that comes between us. If you win the glory for which you strive, I must be unhappy; it will bring you joy, while I — I alone — should be the giver of your happiness."

"No, my angel, it was not an idea, not a thought; it was a man that first led me into this glorious path."

"A man!" she cried in terror.

"Do you remember, Pépita, the Polish officer who stayed with us in 1809?"

“Do I remember him!” she exclaimed; “I am often annoyed because my memory still recalls those eyes, like tongues of fire darting from coals of hell, those hollows above the eyebrows, that broad skull stripped of hair, the upturned moustache, the angular, worn face! — What awful impassiveness in his bearing! Ah! surely if there had been a room in any inn I would never have allowed him to sleep here.”

“That Polish gentleman,” resumed Balthazar, “was named Adam de Wierzchownia. When you left us alone that evening in the parlor, we happened by chance to speak of chemistry. Compelled by poverty to give up the study of that science, he had become a soldier. It was, I think, by means of a glass of sugared water that we recognized each other as adepts. When I ordered Mulquinier to bring the sugar in pieces, the captain gave a start of surprise. ‘Have you studied chemistry?’ he asked. ‘With Lavoisier,’ I answered. ‘You are happy in being rich and free,’ he cried; then from the depths of his bosom came the sigh of a man, — one of those sighs which reveal a hell of anguish hidden in the brain or in the heart, a something ardent, concentrated, not to be expressed in words. He ended his sentence with a look that startled me. After a pause, he told me that Poland being at her last gasp he had taken refuge in Sweden. There he had sought consolation for his country’s fate in the

study of chemistry, for which he had always felt an irresistible vocation. ‘And I see you recognize as I do,’ he added, ‘that gum arabic, sugar, and starch, reduced to powder, each yield a substance absolutely similar, with, when analyzed, the same qualitative result.’

“He paused again; and then, after examining me with a searching eye, he said confidentially, in a low voice, certain grave words whose general meaning alone remains fixed on my memory; but he spoke with a force of tone, with fervid inflections, with an energy of gesture, which stirred my very vitals, and struck my imagination as the hammer strikes the anvil. I will tell you briefly the arguments he used, which were to me like the live coal laid by the Almighty upon Isaiah’s tongue; for my studies with Lavoisier enabled me to understand their full bearing.

“‘Monsieur,’ he said, ‘the parity of these three substances, in appearance so distinct, led me to think that all the productions of nature ought to have a single principle. The researches of modern chemistry prove the truth of this law in the larger part of natural effects. Chemistry divides creation into two distinct parts, — organic nature, and inorganic nature. Organic nature, comprising as it does all animal and vegetable creations which show an organization more or less perfect, — or, to be more exact, a greater or lesser

motive power, which gives more or less sensibility, — is, undoubtedly, the more important part of our earth. Now, analysis has reduced all the products of this nature to four simple substances, namely: three gases, nitrogen, hydrogen, and oxygen, and another simple substance, non-metallic and solid, carbon. Inorganic nature, on the contrary, so simple, devoid of movement and sensation, denied the power of growth (too hastily accorded to it by Linnæus), possesses fifty-three simple substances, or elements, whose different combinations make its products. Is it probable that means should be more numerous where a lesser number of results are produced?

“ ‘ My master’s opinion was that these fifty-three primary bodies have one originating principle, acted upon in the past by some force the knowledge of which has perished to-day, but which human genius ought to rediscover. Well, then, suppose that this force does live and act again; we have chemical unity. Organic and inorganic nature would apparently then rest on four essential principles, — in fact, if we could decompose nitrogen which we ought to consider a negation, we should have but three. This brings us at once close upon the great Ternary of the ancients and of the alchemists of the Middle Ages, whom we do wrong to scorn. Modern chemistry is nothing more than that. It is much, and yet little, — much, because the science has never recoiled

before difficulty ; little, in comparison with what remains to be done. Chance has served her well, my noble Science ! Is not that tear of crystallized pure carbon, the diamond, seemingly the last substance possible to create ? The old alchemists, who thought that gold was decomposable and therefore creatable, shrank from the idea of producing the diamond. Yet we have discovered the nature and the law of its composition.

“ ‘ As for me,’ he continued, ‘ I have gone farther still. An experiment proved to me that the mysterious Ternary, which has occupied the human mind from time immemorial, will not be found by physical analyses, which lack direction to a fixed point. I will relate, in the first place, the experiment itself.

“ ‘ Sow cress-seed (to take one among the many substances of organic nature) in flour of brimstone (to take another simple substance). Sprinkle the seed with distilled water, that no unknown element may reach the product of the germination. The seed germinates, and sprouts from a known environment, and feeds only on elements known by analysis. Cut off the stalks from time to time, till you get a sufficient quantity to produce after burning them enough ashes for the experiment. Well, by analyzing those ashes, you will obtain silicic acid, aluminium, phosphate and carbonate of lime, carbonate of magnesia, the sulphate and carbonate of potassium, and oxide of iron, precisely as if the

cress had grown in ordinary earth, beside a brook. Now, those elements did not exist in the brimstone, a simple substance which served for soil to the cress, nor in the distilled water with which the plant was nourished, whose composition was known. But since they are no more to be found in the seed itself, we can explain their presence in the plant only by assuming the existence of a primary element common to all the substances contained in the cress, and also to all those by which we environed it. Thus the air, the distilled water, the brimstone, and the various elements which analysis finds in the cress, namely, potash, lime, magnesia, aluminium, etc., should have one common principle floating in the atmosphere like light of the sun.

“ ‘From this unimpeachable experiment,’ he cried, ‘I deduce the existence of the Alkahest, the Absolute, — a substance common to all created things, differentiated by one primary force. Such is the net meaning and position of the problem of the Absolute, which appears to me to be solvable. In it we find the mysterious Ternary, before whose shrine humanity has knelt from the dawn of ages, — the primary matter, the medium, the product. We find that terrible number THREE in all things human. It governs religions, sciences, and laws.

“ ‘It was at this point,’ he went on, ‘that poverty put an end to my researches. You were the pupil of

Lavoisier, you are rich, and master of your own time, I will therefore tell you my conjectures. Listen to the conclusions my personal experiments have led me to foresee. The PRIME MATTER must be the common principle in the three gases and in carbon. The MEDIUM must be the principle common to negative and positive electricity. Proceed to the discovery of the proofs that will establish those two truths; you will then find the explanation of all phenomenal existence.

“ ‘ Oh, monsieur ! ’ he cried, striking his brow, ‘ when I know that I carry here the last word of Creation, when intuitively I perceive the Unconditioned, is it *living* to be dragged hither and thither in the ruck of men who fly at each other’s throats at the word of command without knowing what they are doing? My actual life is an inverted dream. My body comes and goes and acts; it moves amid bullets, and cannon, and men; it crosses Europe at the will of a power I obey and yet despise. My soul has no consciousness of these acts; it is fixed, immovable, plunged in one idea, rapt in that idea, the Search for the Alkahest, — for that principle by which seeds that are absolutely alike, growing in the same environments, produce, some a white, others a yellow flower. The same phenomenon is seen in silkworms fed from the same leaves, and apparently constituted exactly alike, — one produces yellow silk, another white; and if we come to man himself, we

find that children often resemble neither father nor mother. The logical deduction from this fact surely involves the explanation of all the phenomena of nature.

“ ‘ Ah, what can be more in harmony with our ideas of God than to believe he created all things by the simplest method? The Pythagorean worship of ONE, from which come all other numbers, and which represents Primal Matter; that of the number Two, the first aggregation and the type of all the rest; that of the number THREE, which throughout all time has symbolized God,—that is to say, Matter, Force, and Product,—are they not an echo, lingering along the ages, of some confused knowledge of the Absolute? Stahl, Becker, Paracelsus, Agrippa, all the great Searchers into occult causes took the Great Triad for their watchword,—in other words, the Ternary. Ignorant men who despise alchemy, that transcendent chemistry, are not aware that our work is only carrying onward the passionate researches of those great men. Had I found the Absolute, the Unconditioned, I meant to have grappled with Motion. Ah! while I am swallowing gunpowder and leading men uselessly to their death, my former master is piling discovery upon discovery! he is soaring towards the Absolute, while I—I shall die like a dog in the trenches!’

“ ‘ When this poor grand man recovered his composure, he said, in a touching tone of brotherhood, ‘ If I

see cause for a great experiment I will bequeath it to you before I die.'—My Pépita," cried Balthazar, taking his wife's hands, "tears of anguish rolled down his hollow cheeks, as he cast into my soul the fiery arguments that Lavoisier had timidly recognized without daring to follow them out —"

"Oh!" cried Madame Claës, unable to refrain from interrupting her husband, "that man, passing one night under our roof, was able to deprive us of your love, to destroy with a phrase, a word, the happiness of a family! Oh, my dear Balthazar, did he make the sign of the cross? did you examine him? The Tempter alone could have had that flaming eye which sent forth the fire of Prometheus. Yes, none but the Devil could have torn you from me. From that day you have been neither husband, nor father, nor master of your family."

"What!" exclaimed Balthazar, springing to his feet and casting a piercing glance at his wife, "do you blame your husband for rising above the level of other men that he may lay at your feet the divine purple of his glory, as a paltry offering in exchange for the treasures of your heart! Ah, my Pépita," he cried, "you do not know what I have done. In these three years I have made giant strides —"

His face seemed to his wife at this moment more transfigured under the fires of genius than she had ever

seen it under the fires of love ; and she wept as she listened to him.

“ I have combined chlorine and nitrogen ; I have decomposed many substances hitherto considered simple ; I have discovered new metals. Why ! ” he continued, noticing that his wife wept, “ I have even decomposed tears. Tears contain a little phosphate of lime, chloride of sodium, mucin, and water.”

He went on speaking, without observing the spasm of pain that contracted Joséphine’s features ; he was again astride of Science, which bore him with outspread wings far away from material existence.

“ This analysis, my dear,” he went on, “ is one of the most convincing proofs of the theory of the Absolute. All life involves combustion. According to the greater or the lesser activity of the fire on its hearth is life more or less enduring. In like manner, the destruction of mineral bodies is indefinitely retarded, because in their case combustion is nominal, latent, or imperceptible. In like manner, again, vegetables, which are constantly revived by combinations producing dampness, live indefinitely ; in fact, we still possess certain vegetables which existed before the period of the last cataclysm. But each time that nature has perfected an organism and then, for some unknown reason, has introduced into it sensation, instinct, or intelligence (three marked stages of the organic system),

these three agencies necessitate a combustion whose activity is in direct proportion to the result obtained. Man, who represents the highest point of intelligence, and who offers us the only organism by which we arrive at a power that is semi-creative—namely, THOUGHT—is, among all zoölogical creations, the one in which combustion is found in its most intense degree; whose powerful effects may in fact be seen to some extent in the phosphates, sulphates, and carbonates which man's body reveals to our analysis. May not these substances be traces left within him of the passage of the electric fluid which is the principle of all fertilization? Would not electricity manifest itself by a greater variety of compounds in him than in any other animal? Should not he have faculties above those of all other created beings for the purpose of absorbing fuller portions of the Absolute principle? and may he not assimilate that principle so as to produce, in some more perfect mechanism, his force and his ideas? I think so. Man is a retort. In my judgment, the brain of an idiot contains too little phosphorus or other product of electro-magnetism, that of a madman too much; the brain of an ordinary man has but little, while that of a man of genius is saturated to its due degree. The man constantly in love, the street-porter, the dancer, the large eater, are the ones who disperse the force

resulting from their electrical apparatus. Consequently, our feelings — ”

“ Enough, Balthazar ! you terrify me ; you commit sacrilege. What, is my love — ”

“ An ethereal matter disengaged, an emanation, the key of the Absolute. Conceive if I — I, the first, should find it, find it, find it ! ”

As he uttered the words in three rising tones, the expression of his face rose by degrees to inspiration. “ I shall make metals,” he cried ; “ I shall make diamonds, I shall be a co-worker with Nature ! ”

“ Will you be the happier ? ” she asked in despair. “ Accursed science ! accursed demon ! You forget, Claës, that you commit the sin of pride, the sin of which Satan was guilty ; you assume the attributes of God.”

“ Oh ! oh ! God ! ”

“ He denies Him ! ” she cried, wringing her hands. “ Claës, God wields a power that you can never gain.”

At this argument, which seemed to discredit his beloved Science, he looked at his wife and trembled.

“ What power ? ” he asked.

“ Primal force — motion,” she replied. “ This is what I learn from the books your mania has constrained me to read. Analyze fruits, flowers, Malaga wine ; you will discover, undoubtedly, that their substances come, like those of your water-cress, from a medium that seems foreign to them. You can, if need be, find them

in nature ; but when you have them, can you combine them? can you make the flowers, the fruits, the Malaga wine? Will you have grasped the inscrutable effects of the sun, of the atmosphere of Spain? Ah! decomposing is not creating.”

“ If I discover the magistral force, I shall be able to create.”

“ Will nothing stop him?” cried Pépita. “ Oh! my love, my love! it is killed! I have lost him!”

She wept bitterly, and her eyes, illumined by grief and by the sanctity of the feelings that flooded her soul, shone with greater beauty than ever through her tears.

“ Yes,” she resumed in a broken voice, “ you are dead to all. I see it but too well. Science is more powerful within you than your own self; it bears you to heights from which you will return no more to be the companion of a poor woman. What joys can I still offer you? Ah! I would fain believe, as a wretched consolation, that God has indeed created you to make manifest his works, to chant his praises; that he has put within your breast the irresistible power that has mastered you — But no; God is good; he would keep in your heart some thoughts of the woman who adores you, of the children you are bound to protect. It is the Evil One alone who is helping you to walk amid these fathomless abysses, these clouds of outer darkness, where the light of faith does not guide you, — nothing

guides you but a terrible belief in your own faculties! Were it otherwise, would you not have seen that you have wasted nine hundred thousand francs in three years? Oh! do me justice, you, my God on earth! I reproach you not; were we alone I would bring you, on my knees, all that I possess and say, 'Take it, fling it into your furnace, turn it into smoke;' and I should laugh to see it float away in vapor. Were you poor, I would beg without shame for the coal to light your furnace. Oh! could my body yield your hateful Alkahest, I would fling myself upon those fires with joy, since your glory, your delight is in that unfound secret. But our children, Claës, our children! what will become of them if you do not soon discover this hellish thing? Do you know why Pierquin came to-day? He came for thirty thousand francs, which you owe and cannot pay. I told him that you had the money, so that I might spare you the mortification of his questions; but to get it I must sell our family silver."

She saw her husband's eyes grow moist, and she flung herself despairingly at his feet, raising up to him her supplicating hands.

"My friend," she cried, "refrain awhile from these researches; let us economize, let us save the money that may enable you to take them up hereafter, — if, indeed, you cannot renounce this work. Oh! I do not condemn it; I will heat your furnaces if you ask it; but I implore

you, do not reduce our children to beggary. Perhaps you cannot love them, Science may have consumed your heart; but oh! do not bequeath them a wretched life in place of the happiness you owe them. Motherhood has sometimes been too weak a power in my heart; yes, I have sometimes wished I were not a mother, that I might be closer to your soul, your life! And now, to stifle my remorse, must I plead the cause of my children before you, and not my own?"

Her hair fell loose and floated over her shoulders, her eyes shot forth her feelings as though they had been arrows. She triumphed over her rival. Balthazar lifted her, carried her to the sofa, and knelt at her feet.

"Have I caused you such grief?" he said, in the tone of a man waking from a painful dream.

"My poor Claës! yes, and you will cause me more, in spite of yourself," she said, passing her hand over his hair. "Sit here beside me," she continued, pointing to the sofa. "Ah! I can forget it all now, now that you come back to us; all can be repaired — but you will not abandon me again? say that you will not! My noble husband, grant me a woman's influence on your heart, that influence which is so needful to the happiness of suffering artists, to the troubled minds of great men. You may be harsh to me, angry with me if you will, but let me check you a little for your good. I will never abuse the power if you will grant it. Be

famous, but be happy too. Do not love Chemistry better than you love us. Hear me, we will be generous; we will let Science share your heart; but oh! my Claës, be just; let us have our half. Tell me, is not my disinterestedness sublime?"

She made him smile. With the marvellous art such women possess, she carried the momentous question into the regions of pleasantry where women reign. But though she seemed to laugh, her heart was violently contracted and could not easily recover the quiet even action that was habitual to it. And yet, as she saw in the eyes of Balthazar the rebirth of a love which was once her glory, the full return of a power she thought she had lost, she said to him with a smile:—

"Believe me, Balthazar, nature made us to feel; and though you may wish us to be mere electrical machines, yet your gases and your ethereal disengaged matters will never explain the gift we possess of looking into futurity."

"Yes," he exclaimed, "by affinity. The power of vision which makes the poet, the power of deduction which makes the man of science, are based on invisible affinities, intangible, imponderable, which vulgar minds class as moral phenomena, whereas they are physical effects. The prophet sees and deduces. Unfortunately, such affinities are too rare and too obscure to be subjected to analysis or observation."

“Is this,” she said, giving him a kiss to drive away the Chemistry she had so unfortunately reawakened, “what you call an affinity?”

“No; it is a compound; two substances that are equivalents are neutral, they produce no reaction —”

“Oh! hush, hush,” she cried, “you will make me die of grief. I can never bear to see my rival in the transports of your love.”

“But, my dear life, I think only of you. My work is for the glory of my family. You are the basis of all my hopes.”

“Ah, look me in the eyes!”

The scene had made her as beautiful as a young woman; of her whole person Balthazar saw only her head, rising from a cloud of lace and muslin.

“Yes, I have done wrong to abandon you for Science,” he said. “If I fall back into thought and pre-occupation, then, my Pépita, you must drag me from them; I desire it.”

She lowered her eyes and let him take her hand, her greatest beauty, — a hand that was both strong and delicate.

“But I ask more,” she said.

“You are so lovely, so delightful, you can obtain all,” he answered.

“I wish to destroy that laboratory, and chain up Science,” she said, with fire in her eyes.

“So be it—let Chemistry go to the devil!”

“This moment effaces all!” she cried. “Make me suffer now, if you will.”

Tears came to Balthazar’s eyes, as he heard these words.

“You were right, love,” he said. “I have seen you through a veil; I have not understood you.”

“If it concerned only me,” she said, “willingly would I have suffered in silence, never would I have raised my voice against my sovereign. But your sons must be thought of, Claës. If you continue to dissipate your property, no matter how glorious the object you have in view the world will take little account of it, it will only blame you and yours. But surely, it is enough for a man of your noble nature that his wife has shown him a danger he did not perceive. We will talk of this no more,” she cried, with a smile and a glance of coquetry. “To-night, my Claës, let us not be less than happy.”

VII.

ON the morrow of this evening so eventful for the Claës family, Balthazar, from whom Joséphine had doubtless obtained some promise as to the cessation of his researches, remained in the parlor, and did not enter his laboratory. The succeeding day the household prepared to move into the country, where they stayed for more than two months, only returning to town in time to prepare for the fête which Claës determined to give, as in former years, to commemorate his wedding day. He now began by degrees to obtain proof of the disorder which his experiments and his indifference had brought into his business affairs.

Madame Claës, far from irritating the wound by remarking on it, continually found remedies for the evil that was done. Of the seven servants who customarily served the family, there now remained only Lemulquinier, Josette the cook, and an old waiting-woman, named Martha, who had never left her mistress since the latter left her convent. It was of course impossible to give a fête to the whole society of Douai with so few

servants, but Madame Claës overcame all difficulties by proposing to send to Paris for a cook, to train the gardener's son as a waiter, and to borrow Pierquin's manservant. Thus the pinched circumstances of the family passed unnoticed by the community.

During the twenty days of preparation for the fête, Madame Claës was cleverly able to outwit her husband's listlessness. She commissioned him to select the rarest plants and flowers to decorate the grand staircase, the gallery, and the salons ; then she sent him to Dunkerque to order one of those monstrous fish which are the glory of the burgher tables in the northern departments. A fête like that the Claës were about to give is a serious affair, involving thought and care and active correspondence, in a land where traditions of hospitality put the family honor so much at stake that to servants as well as masters a grand dinner is like a victory won over the guests. Oysters arrived from Ostend, grouse were imported from Scotland, fruits came from Paris ; in short, not the smallest accessory was lacking to the hereditary luxury.

A ball at the House of Claës had an importance of its own. The government of the department was then at Douai, and the anniversary fête of the Claës usually opened the winter season and set the fashion to the neighborhood. For fifteen years, Balthazar had endeavored to make it a distinguished occasion, and had

succeeded so well that the fête was talked of throughout a circumference of sixty miles, and the toilettes, the guests, the smallest details, the novelties exhibited, and the events that took place, were discussed far and wide. These preparations now prevented Claës from thinking, for the time being, of the Alkahest. Since his return to social life and domestic ideas, the servant of science had recovered his self-love as a man, as a Fleming, as the master of a household, and he now took pleasure in the thought of surprising the whole country. He resolved to give a special character to this ball by some exquisite novelty ; and he chose, among all other caprices of luxury, the loveliest, the richest, and the most fleeting, — he turned the old mansion into a fairy bower of rare plants and flowers, and prepared choice bouquets for all the ladies.

The other details of the fête were in keeping with this unheard-of luxury, and nothing seemed likely to mar the effect. But the Twenty-ninth Bulletin and the news of the terrible disasters of the grand army in Russia, and at the passage of the Beresina, were made known on the afternoon of the appointed day. A sincere and profound grief was felt in Douai, and those who were present at the fête, moved by a natural feeling of patriotism, unanimously declined to dance.

Among the letters which arrived that day in Douai, was one for Balthazar from Monsieur de Wierzchownia,

then in Dresden and dying, he wrote, from wounds received in one of the late engagements. He remembered his promise, and desired to bequeath to his former host several ideas on the subject of the Absolute, which had come to him since the period of their meeting. The letter plunged Claës into a reverie which apparently did honor to his patriotism ; but his wife was not misled by it. To her, this festal day brought a double mourning : and the ball, during which the House of Claës shone with departing lustre, was sombre and sad in spite of its magnificence, and the many choice treasures gathered by the hands of six generations, which the people of Douai now beheld for the last time.

Marguerite Claës, just sixteen, was the queen of the day, and on this occasion her parents presented her to society. She attracted all eyes by the extreme simplicity and candor of her air and manner, and especially by the harmony of her form and countenance with the characteristics of her home. She was the embodiment of the Flemish girl whom the painters of that country loved to represent, — the head perfectly rounded and full, chestnut hair parted in the middle and laid smoothly on the brow, gray eyes with a mixture of green, handsome arms, natural stoutness which did not detract from her beauty, a timid air, and yet, on the high square brow an expression of firmness, hidden at present under an apparent calmness and docility. Without being sad or

melancholy, she seemed to have little natural enjoyment. Reflectiveness, order, a sense of duty, the three chief expressions of Flemish nature, were the characteristics of a face that seemed cold at first sight, but to which the eye was recalled by a certain grace of outline and a placid pride which seemed the pledges of domestic happiness. By one of those freaks which physiologists have not yet explained, she bore no likeness to either father or mother, but was the living image of her maternal great-grandmother, a Conyncks of Bruges, whose portrait, religiously preserved, bore witness to the resemblance.

The supper gave some life to the ball. If the military disasters forbade the delights of dancing, every one felt that they need not exclude the pleasures of the table. The true patriots, however, retired early; only the more indifferent remained, together with a few card-players and the intimate friends of the family. Little by little the brilliantly lighted house, to which all the notabilities of Douai had flocked, sank into silence, and by one o'clock in the morning the great gallery was deserted, the lights were extinguished in one salon after another, and the court-yard, lately so bustling and brilliant, grew dark and gloomy, — prophetic image of the future that lay before the family. When the Claës returned to their own appartement, Balthazar gave his wife the letter he had received from the Polish officer :

Joséphine returned it with a mournful gesture ; she foresaw the coming doom.

From that day forth, Balthazar made no attempt to disguise the weariness and the depression that assailed him. In the mornings, after the family breakfast, he played for awhile in the parlor with little Jean, and talked to his daughters, who were busy with their sewing, or embroidery or lace-work ; but he soon wearied of the play and of the talk, and seemed at last to get through with them as a duty. When his wife came down again after dressing, she always found him sitting in an easy-chair looking blankly at Marguerite and Félicie, quite undisturbed by the rattle of their bobbins. When the newspaper was brought in, he read it slowly like a retired merchant at a loss how to kill the time. Then he would get up, look at the sky through the window panes, go back to his chair and mend the fire drearily, as though he were deprived of all consciousness of his own movements by the tyranny of ideas.

Madame Claës keenly regretted her defects of education and memory. It was difficult for her to sustain an interesting conversation for any length of time ; perhaps this is always difficult between two persons who have said everything to each other, and are forced to seek for subjects of interest outside the life of the heart, or the life of material existence. The life of the heart has its own moments of expansion which

need some stimulus to bring them forth ; discussions of material life cannot long occupy superior minds accustomed to decide promptly ; and the mere gossip of society is intolerable to loving natures. Consequently, two isolated beings who know each other thoroughly ought to seek their enjoyments in the higher regions of thought ; for it is impossible to satisfy with paltry things the immensity of the relation between them. Moreover, when a man has accustomed himself to deal with great subjects, he becomes unamusable, unless he preserves in the depths of his heart a certain guileless simplicity and unconstraint which often make great geniuses such charming children ; but the childhood of the heart is a rare human phenomenon among those whose mission it is to see all, know all, and comprehend all.

During these first months, Madame Claës worked her way through this critical situation, by unwearying efforts, which love or necessity suggested to her. She tried to learn backgammon, which she had never been able to play, but now, from an impetus easy to understand, she ended by mastering it. Then she interested Balthazar in the education of his daughters, and asked him to direct their studies. All such resources were, however, soon exhausted. There came a time when Joséphine's relation to Balthazar was like that of Madame de Maintenon to Louis XIV. ; she had to amuse

the unamusable, but without the pomps of power or the wiles of a court which could play comedies like the sham embassies from the King of Siam and the Shah of Persia. After wasting the revenues of France, Louis XIV., no longer young or successful, was reduced to the expedients of a family heir to raise the money he needed; in the midst of his grandeur he felt his impotence, and the royal nurse who had rocked the cradles of his children was often at her wit's end to rock his, or soothe the monarch now suffering from his misuse of men and things, of life and God. Claës, on the contrary, suffered from too much power. Stifling in the clutch of a single thought, he dreamed of the pomps of Science, of treasures for the human race, of glory for himself. He suffered as artists suffer in the grip of poverty, as Samson suffered beneath the pillars of the temple. The result was the same for the two sovereigns; though the intellectual monarch was crushed by his inward force, the other by his weakness.

What could Pépita do, singly, against this species of scientific nostalgia? After employing every means that family life afforded her, she called society to the rescue, and gave two "cafés" every week. Cafés at Douai took the place of teas. A café was an assemblage at which, during a whole evening, the guests sipped the delicious wines and liqueurs which overflow the cellars of that ever-blessed land, ate the Flemish dainties and

took their *café noir* or their *café au lait frappé*, while the women sang ballads, discussed each other's toilettes, and related the gossip of the day. It was a living picture by Mieris or Terburg, without the pointed gray hats, the scarlet plumes, or the beautiful costumes of the sixteenth century. And yet, Balthazar's efforts to play the part of host, his constrained courtesy, his forced animation, left him the next day in a state of languor which showed but too plainly the depths of the inward ill.

These continual fêtes, weak remedies for the real evil, only increased it. Like branches which caught him as he rolled down the precipice, they retarded Claës's fall, but in the end he fell the heavier. Though he never spoke of his former occupations, never showed the least regret for the promise he had given not to renew his researches, he grew to have the melancholy motions, the feeble voice, the depression of a sick person. The ennui that possessed him showed at times in the very manner with which he picked up the tongs and built fantastic pyramids in the fire with bits of coal, utterly unconscious of what he was doing. When night came he was evidently relieved; sleep no doubt released him from the importunities of thought: the next day he rose wearily to encounter another day, — seeming to measure time as the tired traveller measures the desert he is forced to cross.

If Madame Claës knew the cause of this languor she endeavored not to see the extent of its ravages. Full of courage against the sufferings of the mind, she was helpless against the generous impulses of the heart. She dared not question Balthazar when she saw him listening to the laughter of little Jean or the chatter of his girls, with the air of a man absorbed in secret thoughts ; but she shuddered when she saw him shake off his melancholy and try, with generous intent, to seem cheerful, that he might not distress others. The little coquetries of the father with his daughters, or his games with little Jean, moistened the eyes of the poor wife, who often left the room to hide the feelings that heroic effort caused her, — a heroism the cost of which is well understood by women, a generosity that well-nigh breaks their heart. At such times Madame Claës longed to say, “ Kill me, and do what you will ! ”

Little by little Balthazar’s eyes lost their fire and took the glaucous opaque tint which overspreads the eyes of old men. His attentions to his wife, his manner of speaking, his whole bearing, grew heavy and inert. These symptoms became more marked towards the end of April, terrifying Madame Claës, to whom the sight was now intolerable, and who had all along reproached herself a thousand times while she admired the Flemish loyalty which kept her husband faithful to his promise.

At last, one day when Balthazar seemed more depressed than ever, she hesitated no longer ; she resolved to sacrifice everything and bring him back to life.

“ Dear friend,” she said, “ I release you from your promise.”

Balthazar looked at her in amazement.

“ You are thinking of your researches, are you not ? ” she continued.

He answered by a gesture of startling eagerness. Far from remonstrating, Madame Claës, who had had leisure to sound the abyss into which they were about to fall together, took his hand and pressed it, smiling.

“ Thank you,” she said ; “ now I am sure of my power. You sacrificed more than your life to me. In future, be the sacrifices mine. Though I have sold some of my diamonds, enough are left, with those my brother gave me, to get the necessary money for your experiments. I intended those jewels for my daughters, but your glory shall sparkle in their stead ; and, besides, you will some day replace them with other and finer diamonds.”

The joy that suddenly lighted her husband’s face was like a death-knell to the wife : she saw, with anguish, that the man’s passion was stronger than himself. Claës had faith in his work which enabled him to walk without faltering on a path which, to his wife, was the edge of a precipice. For him faith, for her doubt, —

for her the heavier burden: does not the woman ever suffer for the two? At this moment she chose to believe in his success, that she might justify to herself her connivance in the probable wreck of their fortunes.

“The love of all my life can be no recompense for your devotion, *Pépita*,” said *Claës*, deeply moved.

He had scarcely uttered the words when *Marguerite* and *Félicie* entered the room and wished him good-morning. *Madame Claës* lowered her eyes and remained for a moment speechless in presence of her children, whose future she had just sacrificed to a delusion; her husband, on the contrary, took them on his knees, and talked to them gayly, delighted to give vent to the joy that choked him.

From this day *Madame Claës* shared the impassioned life of her husband. The future of her children, their father's credit, were two motives as powerful to her as glory and science were to *Claës*. After the diamonds were sold in Paris, and the purchase of chemicals was again begun, the unhappy woman never knew another hour's peace of mind. The demon of Science and the frenzy of research which consumed her husband now agitated her own mind; she lived in a state of continual expectation, and sat half-lifeless for days together in the deep armchair, paralyzed by the very violence of her wishes, which, finding no food, like those of

Balthazar, in the daily hopes of the laboratory, tormented her spirit and aggravated her doubts and fears. Sometimes, blaming herself for compliance with a passion whose object was futile and condemned by the Church, she would rise, go to the window on the courtyard and gaze with terror at the chimney of the laboratory. If the smoke were rising, an expression of despair came into her face, a conflict of thoughts and feelings raged in her heart and mind. She beheld her children's future fleeing in that smoke, but — was she not saving their father's life? was it not her first duty to make him happy? This last thought calmed her for a moment.

She obtained the right to enter the laboratory and remain there; but even this melancholy satisfaction was soon renounced. Her sufferings were too keen when she saw that Balthazar took no notice of her, or seemed at times annoyed by her presence; in that fatal place she went through paroxysms of jealous impatience, angry desires to destroy the building, — a living death of untold miseries. Lemulquinier became to her a species of barometer: if she heard him whistle as he laid the breakfast-table or the dinner-table, she guessed that Balthazar's experiments were satisfactory, and there were prospects of a coming success; if, on the other hand, the man were morose and gloomy, she looked at him and trembled, — Balthazar must surely be

dissatisfied. Mistress and valet ended by understanding each other, notwithstanding the proud reserve of the one and the reluctant submission of the other.

Feeble and defenceless against the terrible prostrations of thought, the poor woman at last gave way under the alternations of hope and despair which increased the distress of the loving wife, and the anxieties of the mother trembling for her children. She now practised the doleful silence which formerly chilled her heart, not observing the gloom that pervaded the house, where whole days went by in that melancholy parlor without a smile, often without a word. Led by sad maternal foresight, she trained her daughters to household work, and tried to make them skilful in womanly employments, that they might have the means of living if destitution came. The outward calm of this quiet home covered terrible agitations. Towards the end of the summer Balthazar had used the money derived from the diamonds, and was twenty thousand francs in debt to Messieurs Protez and Chiffreville.

In August, 1813, about a year after the scene with which this history begins, although Claës had made a few valuable experiments, for which, unfortunately, he cared but little, his efforts had been without result as to the real object of his researches. There came a day when he ended the whole series of experiments, and the sense of his impotence crushed him; the certainty of

having fruitlessly wasted enormous sums of money drove him to despair. It was a frightful catastrophe. He left the garret, descended slowly to the parlor, and threw himself into a chair in the midst of his children, remaining motionless for some minutes as though dead, making no answer to the questions his wife pressed upon him. Tears came at last to his relief, and he rushed to his own chamber that no one might witness his despair.

Joséphine followed him and drew him into her own room, where, alone with her, Balthazar gave vent to his anguish. These tears of a man, these broken words of the hopeless toiler, these bitter regrets of the husband and father, did Madame Claës more harm than all her past sufferings. The victim consoled the executioner. When Balthazar said to her in a tone of dreadful conviction: "I am a wretch; I have gambled away the lives of my children, and your life; you can have no happiness unless I kill myself," — the words struck home to her heart; she knew her husband's nature enough to fear he might at once act out the despairing wish: an inward convulsion, disturbing the very sources of life itself, seized her, and was all the more dangerous because she controlled its violent effects beneath a deceptive calm of manner.

"My friend," she said, "I have consulted, not Pierquin, whose friendship does not hinder him from feeling

some secret satisfaction at our ruin, but an old man who has been as good to me as a father. The Abbé de Solis, my confessor, has shown me how we can still save ourselves from ruin. He came to see the pictures. The value of those in the gallery is enough to pay the sums you have borrowed on your property, and also all that you owe to Messieurs Protez and Chiffreville, who have no doubt an account against you."

Claës made an affirmative sign and bowed his head, the hair of which was now white.

"Monsieur de Solis knows the Happe and Duncker families of Amsterdam; they have a mania for pictures, and are anxious, like all parvenus, to display a luxury which ought to belong only to the old families: he thinks they will pay the full value of ours. By this means we can recover our independence, and out of the purchase money, which will amount to over one hundred thousand ducats, you will have enough to continue the experiments. Your daughters and I will be content with very little; we can fill up the empty frames with other pictures in course of time and by economy; meantime you will be happy."

Balthazar raised his head and looked at his wife with a joy that was mingled with fear. Their rôles were changed. The wife was the protector of the husband. He, so tender, he, whose heart was so at one with his Pépita's, now held her in his arms without perceiving the

horrible convulsion that made her palpitate, and even shook her hair and her lips with a nervous shudder.

“I dared not tell you,” he said, “that between me and the Unconditioned, the Absolute, scarcely a hair’s breadth intervenes. To gasify metals, I only need to find the means of submitting them to intense heat in some centre where the pressure of the atmosphere is nil, — in short, in a vacuum.”

Madame Claës could not endure the egotism of this reply. She expected a passionate acknowledgment of her sacrifices — she received a problem in chemistry! The poor woman left her husband abruptly and returned to the parlor, where she fell into a chair between her frightened daughters, and burst into tears. Marguerite and Félicie took her hands, kneeling one on each side of her, not knowing the cause of her grief, and asking at intervals, “Mother, what is it?”

“My poor children, I am dying; I feel it.”

The answer struck home to Marguerite’s heart; she saw, for the first time on her mother’s face, the signs of that peculiar pallor which only comes on olive-tinted skins.

“Martha, Martha!” cried Félicie, “come quickly; mamma wants you.”

The old duenna ran in from the kitchen, and as soon as she saw the livid hue of the dusky skin usually high-colored, she cried out in Spanish, —

“Body of Christ! madame is dying!”

Then she rushed precipitately back, told Josette to heat water for a footbath, and returned to the parlor.

“Don’t alarm Monsieur Claës; say nothing to him, Martha,” said her mistress. “My poor dear girls,” she added, pressing Marguerite and Félicie to her heart with a despairing action; “I wish I could live long enough to see you married and happy. Martha,” she continued, “tell Lemulquinier to go to Monsieur de Solis and ask him in my name to come here.”

The shock of this attack extended to the kitchen. Josette and Martha, both devoted to Madame Claës and her daughters, felt the blow in their own affections. Martha’s dreadful announcement, — “Madame is dying; monsieur must have killed her; get ready a mustard-bath,” — forced certain exclamations from Josette, which she launched at Lemulquinier. He, cold and impassive, went on eating at the corner of a table before one of the windows of the kitchen, where all was kept as clean as the boudoir of a fine lady.

“I knew how it would end,” said Josette, glancing at the valet and mounting a stool to take down a copper kettle that shone like gold. “There’s no mother could quietly stand by and see a father amusing himself by chopping up a fortune like his into sausage-meat.”

Josette, whose head was covered by a round cap with crimped borders, which made it look like a German

nut-cracker, cast a sour look at Lemulquinier, which the greenish tinge of her prominent little eyes made almost venomous. The old valet shrugged his shoulders with a motion worthy of Mirabeau when irritated; then he filled his large mouth with bread and butter sprinkled with chopped onion.

“Instead of thwarting monsieur, madame ought to give him more money,” he said; “and then we should soon be rich enough to swim in gold. There’s not the thickness of a farthing between us and —”

“Well, you’ve got twenty thousand francs laid by; why don’t you give ’em to monsieur? he’s your master, and if you are so sure of his doings —”

“You don’t know anything about them, Josette. Mind your pots and pans, and heat the water,” remarked the old Fleming, interrupting the cook.

“I know enough to know there used to be several thousand ounces of silver-ware about this house which you and your master have melted up; and if you are allowed to have your way, you’ll make ducks and drakes of everything till there’s nothing left.”

“And monsieur,” added Martha, entering the kitchen, “will kill madame, just to get rid of a woman who restrains him and won’t let him swallow up everything he’s got. He’s possessed by the devil; anybody can see that. You don’t risk your soul in helping him, Mulquinier, because you haven’t got any; look at

you! sitting there like a bit of ice when we are all in such distress; the young ladies are crying like two Magdalens. Go and fetch Monsieur l'Abbé de Solis."

"I've got something to do for monsieur. He told me to put the laboratory in order," said the valet. "Besides, it's too far—go yourself."

"Just hear the brute!" cried Martha. "Pray who is to give madame her foot-bath? do you want her to die? she has got a rush of blood to the head."

"Mulquinier," said Marguerite, coming into the servants' hall, which adjoined the kitchen, "on your way back from Monsieur de Solis, call at Dr. Pierquin's house and ask him to come here at once."

"Ha! you've got to go now," said Josette.

"Mademoiselle, monsieur told me to put the laboratory in order," said Lemulquinier, facing the two women and looking them down, with a despotic air.

"Father," said Marguerite, to Monsieur Claës, who was just then descending the stairs, "can you let Mulquinier do an errand for us in town?"

"Now you're forced to go, you old barbarian!" cried Martha, as she heard Monsieur Claës put Mulquinier at his daughter's bidding.

The lack of good-will and devotion shown by the old valet for the family whom he served was a fruitful cause of quarrel between the two women and Lemulquinier,

whose cold-heartedness had the effect of increasing the loyal attachment of Josette and the old duenna.

This dispute, apparently so paltry, was destined to influence the future of the Claës family when, at a later period, they needed succor in misfortune.

VIII.

BALTHAZAR was again so absorbed that he did not notice Joséphine's condition. He took Jean upon his knee and trotted him mechanically, pondering, no doubt, the problem he now had the means of solving. He saw them bring the footbath to his wife, who was still in the parlor, too weak to rise from the low chair in which she was lying; he gazed abstractedly at his daughters now attending on their mother, without inquiring the cause of their tender solicitude. When Marguerite or Jean attempted to speak aloud, Madame Claës hushed them and pointed to Balthazar. Such a scene was of a nature to make a young girl think; and Marguerite, placed as she was between her father and mother, was old enough and sensible enough to weigh their conduct.

There comes a moment in the private life of every family when the children, voluntarily or involuntarily, judge their parents. Madame Claës foresaw the dangers of that moment. Her love for Balthazar impelled her to justify in Marguerite's eyes conduct that might,

to the upright mind of a girl of sixteen, seem faulty in a father. The very respect which she showed at this moment for her husband, making herself and her condition of no account that nothing might disturb his meditation, impressed her children with a sort of awe of the paternal majesty. Such self-devotion, however infectious it might be, only increased Marguerite's admiration for her mother, to whom she was more particularly bound by the close intimacy of their daily lives. This feeling was based on the intuitive perception of sufferings whose causes naturally occupied the young girl's mind. No human power could have hindered some chance word dropped by Martha, or by Josette, from enlightening her as to the real reasons for the condition of her home during the last four years. Notwithstanding Madame Claës's reserve, Marguerite discovered slowly, thread by thread, the clue to the domestic drama. She was soon to be her mother's active confidante, and later, under other circumstances, a formidable judge.

Madame Claës's watchful care now centred upon her eldest daughter, to whom she endeavored to communicate her own self-devotion towards Balthazar. The firmness and sound judgment which she recognized in the young girl made her tremble at the thought of a possible struggle between father and daughter whenever her own death should make the latter mistress of

the household. The poor woman had reached a point where she dreaded the consequences of her death far more than death itself. Her tender solicitude for Balthazar showed itself in the resolution she had this day taken. By freeing his property from incumbrance she secured his independence, and prevented all future disputes by separating his interests from those of her children. She hoped to see him happy until she closed her eyes on earth, and she studied to transmit the tenderness of her own heart to that of Marguerite, trusting that his daughter might continue to be to him an angel of love, while exercising over the family a protecting and conservative authority. Might she not thus shed the light of her love upon her dear ones from beyond the grave? Nevertheless, she was not willing to lower the father in the eyes of his daughter by initiating her into the secret dangers of his scientific passion before it became necessary to do so. She studied Marguerite's soul and character, seeking to discover if the girl's own nature would lead her to be a mother to her brothers and her sister, and a tender, gentle helpmeet to her father.

Madame Claës's last days were thus embittered by fears and mental disquietudes which she dared not confide to others. Conscious that the recent scene had struck her death-blow, she turned her thoughts wholly to the future. Balthazar, meanwhile, now permanently

unfitted for the care of property or the interests of domestic life, thought only of the Absolute.

The heavy silence that reigned in the parlor was broken only by the monotonous beating of Balthazar's foot, which he continued to trot, wholly unaware that Jean had slid from his knee. Marguerite, who was sitting beside her mother and watching the changes on that pallid, convulsed face, turned now and again to her father, wondering at his indifference. Presently the street-door clanged, and the family saw the Abbé de Solis leaning on the arm of his nephew and slowly crossing the court-yard.

"Ah! there is Monsieur Emmanuel," said Félicie.

"That good young man!" exclaimed Madame Claës;
"I am glad to welcome him."

Marguerite blushed at the praise that escaped her mother's lips. For the last two days a remembrance of the young man had stirred mysterious feelings in her heart, and wakened in her mind thoughts that had lain dormant. During the visit made by the Abbé de Solis to Madame Claës on the occasion of his examining the pictures, there happened certain of those imperceptible events which wield so great an influence upon life; and their results were sufficiently important to necessitate a brief sketch of the two personages now first introduced into the history of this family.

It was a matter of principle with Madame Claës to

perform the duties of her religion privately Her confessor, who was almost unknown in the family, now entered the house for the second time only ; but there, as elsewhere, every one was impressed with a sort of tender admiration at the aspect of the uncle and his nephew.

The Abbé de Solis was an octogenarian, with silvery hair, and a withered face from which the vitality seemed to have retreated to the eyes. He walked with difficulty, for one of his shrunken legs ended in a painfully deformed foot, which was cased in a species of velvet bag, and obliged him to use a crutch when the arm of his nephew was not at hand. His bent figure and decrepit body conveyed the impression of a delicate, suffering nature, governed by a will of iron and the spirit of religious purity. This Spanish priest, who was remarkable for his vast learning, his sincere piety, and a wide knowledge of men and things, had been successively a Dominican friar, the *grand pénitencier* of Toledo, and the vicar-general of the archbishopric of Malines. If the French Revolution had not intervened, the influence of the Casa-Réal family would have made him one of the highest dignitaries of the Church ; but the grief he felt for the death of the young duke, Madame Claës's brother, who had been his pupil, turned him from active life, and he now devoted himself to the education of his nephew, who was made an orphan at an early age.

After the conquest of Belgium, the Abbé de Solis settled at Douai to be near Madame Claës. From his youth up he had professed an enthusiasm for Saint Theresa which, together with the natural bent of his mind, led him to the mystical side of Christianity. Finding in Flanders, where Mademoiselle Bourignon and the writings of the Quietists and Illuminati made the greatest number of proselytes, a flock of Catholics devoted to those ideas, he remained there, — all the more willingly because he was looked up to as a patriarch by this particular communion, which continued to follow the doctrines of the Mystics notwithstanding the censures of the Church upon Fénelon and Madame Guyon. His morals were rigid, his life exemplary, and he was believed to have visions. In spite of his own detachment from the things of life, his affection for his nephew made him careful of the young man's interests. When a work of charity was to be done, the old abbé put the faithful of his flock under contribution before having recourse to his own means ; and his patriarchal authority was so well established, his motives so pure, his discernment so rarely at fault, that every one was ready to answer his appeal. To give an idea of the contrast between the uncle and the nephew, we may compare the old man to a willow on the borders of a stream, hollowed to a skeleton and barely alive, and the young man to a sweet-brier clustering with roses, whose

erect and graceful stems spring up about the hoary trunk of the old tree as if they would support it.

Emmanuel de Solis, rigidly brought up by his uncle, who kept him at his side as a mother keeps her daughter, was full of delicate sensibility, of half-dreamy innocence, — those fleeting flowers of youth which bloom perennially in souls that are nourished on religious principles. The old priest had checked all sensuous emotions in his pupil, preparing him for the trials of life by constant study and a discipline that was almost cloisteral. Such an education, which would launch the youth unstained upon the world and render him happy, provided he were fortunate in his earliest affections, had endowed him with a purity of spirit which gave to his person something of the charm that surrounds a maiden. His modest eyes, veiling a strong and courageous soul, sent forth a light that vibrated in the soul as the tones of a crystal bell sound their undulations on the ear. His face, though regular, was expressive, and charmed the eye with its clear-cut outline, the harmony of its lines, and the perfect repose which came of a heart at peace. All was harmonious. His black hair, his brown eyes and eyebrows, heightened the effect of a white skin and a brilliant color. His voice was such as might have been expected from his beautiful face; and something feminine in his movements accorded well with the melody of its tones and

with the tender brightness of his eyes. He seemed unaware of the charm he exercised by his modest silence, the half-melancholy reserve of his manner, and the respectful attentions he paid to his uncle.

Those who saw the young man as he watched the uncertain steps of the old abbé, and altered his own to suit their devious course, looking for obstructions that might trip his uncle's feet and guiding him to a smoother way, could not fail to recognize in Emmanuel de Solis the generous nature which makes the human being a divine creation. There was something noble in the love that never criticised his uncle, in the obedience that never cavilled at the old man's orders; it seemed as though there were prophecy in the gracious name his godmother had given him. When the abbé gave proof of his Dominican despotism, in their own home or in the presence of others, Emmanuel would sometimes lift his head with so much dignity, as if to assert his metal should any other man assail him, that men of honor were moved at the sight like artists before a glorious picture; for noble sentiments ring as loudly in the soul from living incarnations as from the imagery of art.

Emmanuel had accompanied his uncle when the latter came to examine the pictures of the House of Claës. Hearing from Martha that the Abbé de Solis was in the gallery, Marguerite, anxious to see so celebrated a man, invented an excuse to join her mother and gratify her

curiosity. Entering hastily, with the heedless gayety young girls assume at times to hide their wishes, she encountered near the old abbé, clothed in black and looking decrepit and cadaverous, the fresh, delightful face of a young man. The naïve glances of the youthful pair expressed their mutual astonishment. Marguerite and Emmanuel had no doubt seen each other in their dreams. Both lowered their eyes and raised them again with one impulse; each, by the action, made the same avowal. Marguerite took her mother's arm, and spoke to her to cover her confusion and find shelter under the maternal wing, turning her neck with a swan-like motion to keep sight of Emmanuel, who still supported his uncle on his arm. The light was cleverly arranged to give due value to the pictures, and the half-obscurity of the gallery encouraged those furtive glances which are the joy of timid natures. Neither went so far, even in thought, as the first note of love; yet both felt the mysterious trouble which stirs the heart, and is jealously kept secret in our youth from fastidiousness or modesty.

The first impression which forces a sensibility hitherto suppressed to overflow its borders, is followed in all young people by the same half-stupefied amazement which the first sounds of music produce upon a child. Some children laugh and think; others do not laugh till they have thought; but those whose hearts are called to

live by poetry or love, listen stillly and hear the melody with a look where pleasure flames already, and the search for the infinite begins. If, from an irresistible feeling, we love the places where our childhood first perceived the beauties of harmony, if we remember with delight the musician, and even the instrument, that taught them to us, how much more shall we love the being who reveals to us the music of life? The first heart in which we draw the breath of love, — is it not our home, our native land? Marguerite and Emmanuel were, each to each, that Voice of music which wakes a sense, that hand which lifts the misty veil, and reveals the distant shores bathed in the fires of noonday.

When Madame Claës paused before a picture by Guido representing an angel, Marguerite bent forward to see the impression it made upon Emmanuel, and Emmanuel looked at Marguerite to compare the mute thought on the canvas with the living thought beside him. This involuntary and delightful homage was understood and treasured. The old abbé gravely praised the picture, and Madame Claës answered him, but the youth and the maiden were silent.

Such was their first meeting: the mysterious light of the picture gallery, the stillness of the old house, the presence of their elders, all contributed to trace upon their hearts the delicate lines of this vaporous mirage. The many confused thoughts that surged in Marguerite's

mind grew calm and lay like a limpid ocean traversed by a luminous ray when Emmanuel murmured a few farewell words to Madame Claës. That voice, whose fresh and mellow tone sent nameless delights into her heart, completed the revelation that had come to her, — a revelation which Emmanuel, were he able, should cherish to his own profit; for it often happens that the man whom destiny employs to waken love in the heart of a young girl is ignorant of his work and leaves it unfinished. Marguerite bowed confusedly; her true farewell was in the glance which seemed unwilling to lose so pure and lovely a vision. Like a child she wanted her melody. Their parting took place at the foot of the old staircase near the parlor; and when Marguerite re-entered the room she watched the uncle and the nephew till the street-door closed upon them.

Madame Claës had been so occupied with the serious matters which caused her conference with the abbé that she did not on this occasion observe her daughter's manner. When Monsieur de Solis came again to the house on the occasion of her illness, she was too violently agitated to notice the color that rushed into Marguerite's face and betrayed the tumult of a virgin heart conscious of its first joy. By the time the old abbé was announced, Marguerite had taken up her sewing and appeared to give it such attention that she bowed to the uncle and nephew without looking at them. Monsieur

Claës mechanically returned their salutation and left the room with the air of a man called away by his occupations. The good Dominican sat down beside Madame Claës and looked at her with one of those searching glances by which he penetrated the minds of others ; the sight of Monsieur Claës and his wife was enough to make him aware of a catastrophe.

“ My children,” said the mother, “ go into the garden ; Marguerite, show Emmanuel your father’s tulips.”

Marguerite, half abashed, took Félicie’s arm and looked at the young man, who blushed and caught up little Jean to cover his confusion. When all four were in the garden, Félicie and Jean ran to the other side, leaving Marguerite, who, conscious that she was alone with young de Solis, led him to the pyramid of tulips, arranged precisely in the same manner year after year by Lemulquinier.

“ Do you love tulips ? ” asked Marguerite, after standing for a moment in deep silence, — a silence Emmanuel seemed little disposed to break.

“ Mademoiselle, these flowers are beautiful, but to love them we must perhaps have a taste for them, and know how to understand their beauties. They dazzle me. Constant study in the gloomy little chamber in which I live, close to my uncle, makes me prefer those flowers that are softer to the eye.”

Saying these words he glanced at Marguerite ; but the look, full as it was of confused desires, contained no allusion to the lily whiteness, the sweet serenity, the tender coloring which made her face a flower.

“Do you work very hard?” she asked, leading him to a wooden seat with a back, painted green. “Here,” she continued, “the tulips are not so close ; they will not tire your eyes. Yes, you are right, those colors are dazzling ; they give pain.”

“Do I work hard?” replied the young man after a short silence, as he smoothed the gravel with his foot. “Yes ; I work at many things. My uncle wished to make me a priest.”

“Oh !” exclaimed Marguerite, naïvely.

“I resisted ; I felt no vocation for it. But it required great courage to oppose my uncle’s wishes. He is so good, he loves me so much ! Quite recently he bought a substitute to save me from the conscription — me, a poor orphan !”

“What do you mean to be?” asked Marguerite ; then, immediately checking herself as though she would unsay the words, she added with a pretty gesture, “I beg your pardon ; you must think me very inquisitive.”

“Oh, mademoiselle,” said Emmanuel, looking at her with tender admiration, “except my uncle, no one ever asked me that question. I am studying to be a teacher. I cannot do otherwise ; I am not rich. If

I were principal of a college-school in Flanders I should earn enough to live moderately, and I might marry some simple woman whom I could love. That is the life I look forward to. Perhaps that is why I prefer a daisy in the meadows to these splendid tulips, whose purple and gold and rubies and amethysts betoken a life of luxury, just as the daisy is emblematic of a sweet and patriarchal life, — the life of a poor teacher like me.”

“I have always called the daisies marguerites,” she said.

Emmanuel colored deeply and sought an answer from the sand at his feet. Embarrassed to choose among the thoughts that came to him, which he feared were silly, and disconcerted by his delay in answering, he said at last, “I dared not pronounce your name” — then he paused.

“A teacher?” she said.

“Mademoiselle, I shall be a teacher only as a means of living: I shall undertake great works which will make me nobly useful. I have a strong taste for historical researches.”

“Ah!”

That “ah!” so full of secret thoughts added to his confusion; he gave a foolish laugh and said: —

“You make me talk of myself when I ought only to speak of you.”

“My mother and your uncle must have finished their conversation, I think,” said Marguerite, looking into the parlor through the windows.

“Your mother seems to me greatly changed,” said Emmanuel.

“She suffers, but she will not tell us the cause of her sufferings; and we can only try to share them with her.”

Madame Claës had, in fact, just ended a delicate consultation which involved a case of conscience the Abbé de Solis alone could decide. Foreseeing the utter ruin of the family, she wished to retain, unknown to Balthazar who paid no attention to his business affairs, part of the price of the pictures which Monsieur de Solis had undertaken to sell in Holland, intending to hold it secretly in reserve against the day when poverty should overtake her children. With much deliberation, and after weighing every circumstance, the old Dominican approved the act as one of prudence. He took his leave to prepare at once for the sale, which he engaged to make secretly, so as not to injure Monsieur Claës in the estimation of others.

The next day Monsieur de Solis despatched his nephew, armed with letters of introduction, to Amsterdam, where Emmanuel, delighted to do a service to the Claës family, succeeded in selling all the pictures in the gallery to the noted bankers Happe and Duncker for the ostensible

sum of eighty-five thousand Dutch ducats and fifteen thousand more which were paid over secretly to Madame Claës. The pictures were so well known that nothing was needed to complete the sale but an answer from Balthazar to the letter which Messieurs Happe and Duncker addressed to him. Emmanuel de Solis was commissioned by Claës to receive the price of the pictures, which were thereupon packed and sent away secretly, to conceal the sale from the people of Douai.

Towards the end of September, Balthazar paid off all the sums that he had borrowed, released his property from encumbrance, and resumed his chemical researches ; but the House of Claës was deprived of its noblest ornament. Blinded by his passion, the master showed no regret ; he felt so sure of repairing the loss that in selling the pictures he reserved a right of redemption. In Joséphine's eyes a hundred pictures were as nothing compared to domestic happiness and the satisfaction of her husband's mind ; moreover, she refilled the gallery with other paintings, taken from the reception-rooms, and to conceal the gaps which these left in the front house, she changed the arrangement of the furniture.

When Balthazar's debts were all paid he had about two hundred thousand francs with which to carry on his experiments. The Abbé de Solis and his nephew

took charge secretly of the fifteen thousand ducats reserved by Madame Claës. To increase that sum, the abbé sold the Dutch ducats, to which the events of the Continental war had given a commercial value. One hundred and sixty-five thousand francs were buried in the cellar of the house in which the abbé and his nephew resided.

Madame Claës had the melancholy happiness of seeing her husband incessantly busy and satisfied for nearly eight months. But the shock he had lately given her was too severe; she sank into a state of languor and debility which steadily increased. Balthazar was now so completely absorbed in science that neither the reverses which had overtaken France, nor the first fall of Napoleon, nor the return of the Bourbons, drew him from his laboratory; he was neither husband, father, nor citizen, — solely chemist.

Towards the close of 1814 Madame Claës declined so rapidly that she was no longer able to leave her bed. Unwilling to vegetate in her own chamber, the scene of so much happiness, where the memory of vanished joys forced involuntary comparisons with the present and depressed her, she moved into the parlor. The doctors encouraged this wish by declaring the room more airy, more cheerful, and therefore better suited to her condition. The bed in which the unfortunate woman ended her life was placed between the fireplace

and a window looking on the garden. There she passed her last days, sacredly occupied in training the souls of her young daughters, striving to leave within them the fire of her own. Conjugal love, deprived of its manifestations, allowed maternal love to have its way. The mother now seemed the more delightful because her motherhood had blossomed late. Like all generous persons, she passed through sensitive phases of feeling which she mistook for remorse. Believing that she had defrauded her children of the tenderness that should have been theirs, she sought to redeem those imaginary wrongs ; bestowing attentions and tender cares which made her precious to them ; she longed to make her children live, as it were, within her heart ; to shelter them beneath her feeble wings ; to cherish them enough in the few remaining days to redeem the time during which she had neglected them. The sufferings of her mind gave to her words and her caresses a glowing warmth that issued from her soul. Her eyes caressed her children, her voice with its yearning intonations touched their hearts, her hand showered blessings on their heads.

IX.

THE good people of Douai were not surprised that visitors were no longer received at the House of Claës, and that Balthazar gave no more fêtes on the anniversary of his marriage. Madame Claës's state of health seemed a sufficient reason for the change, and the payment of her husband's debts put a stop to the current gossip; moreover, the political vicissitudes to which Flanders was subjected, the war of the Hundred-days, and the occupation of the Allied armies, put the chemist and his researches completely out of people's minds. During those two years Douai was so often on the point of being taken, it was so constantly occupied either by the French or by the enemy, so many foreigners came there, so many of the country-people sought refuge within its walls, so many lives were in peril, so many catastrophes occurred, that each man thought only of himself.

The Abbé de Solis and his nephew, and the two Pierquins, doctor and lawyer, were the only persons who now visited Madame Claës; for whom the winter of 1814-1815 was a long and dreary death-scene. Her

husband rarely came to see her. It is true that after dinner he remained some hours in the parlor, near her bed ; but as she no longer had the strength to keep up a conversation, he merely said a few words, invariably the same, sat down, spoke no more, and a dreary silence settled down upon the room. The monotony of this existence was broken only on the days when the Abbé de Solis and his nephew passed the evening with Madame Claës.

While the abbé played backgammon with Balthazar, Marguerite talked with Emmanuel by the bedside of her mother, who smiled at their innocent joy, not allowing them to see how painful and yet how soothing to her wounded spirit were the fresh breezes of their virgin love, murmuring in fitful words from heart to heart. The inflection of their voices, to them so full of charm, to her was heart-breaking ; a glance of mutual understanding surprised between the two threw her, half-dead as she was, back to the young and happy past which gave such bitterness to the present. Emmanuel and Marguerite with intuitive delicacy of feeling repressed the sweet half-childish play of love, lest it should hurt the saddened woman whose wounds they instinctively divined.

No one has yet remarked that feelings have an existence of their own, a nature which is developed by the circumstances that environ them, and in which they are born ; they bear a likeness to the places of their growth,

and keep the imprint of the ideas that influenced their development. There are passions ardently conceived which remain ardent, like that of Madame Claës for her husband: there are sentiments on which all life has smiled; these retain their spring-time gayety, their harvest-time of joy, seasons that never fail of laughter or of fêtes: but there are other loves, framed in melancholy, circled by distress, whose pleasures are painful, costly, burdened by fears, poisoned by remorse, or blackened by despair. The love in the heart of Marguerite and Emmanuel, as yet unknown to them for love, the sentiment that budded into life beneath the gloomy arches of the picture-gallery, beside the stern old abbé, in a still and silent moment, that love so grave and so discreet, yet rich in tender depths, in secret delights that were luscious to the taste as stolen grapes snatched from a corner of the vineyard, wore in coming years the sombre browns and grays that surrounded the hour of its birth.

Fearing to give expression to their feelings beside that bed of pain, they unconsciously increased their happiness by a concentration which deepened its imprint on their hearts. The devotion of the daughter, shared by Emmanuel, happy in thus uniting himself with Marguerite and becoming by anticipation the son of her mother, was their medium of communication. Melancholy thanks from the lips of the young girl sup-

planted the honeyed language of lovers ; the sighing of their hearts, surcharged with joy at some interchange of looks, was scarcely distinguishable from the sighs wrung from them by the mother's sufferings. Their happy little moments of indirect avowal, of unuttered promises, of smothered effusion, were like the allegories of Raphael painted on a black ground. Each felt a certainty that neither avowed ; they knew the sun was shining over them, but they could not know what wind might chase away the clouds that gathered about their heads. They doubted the future ; fearing that pain would ever follow them, they stayed timidly among the shadows of the twilight, not daring to say to each other, " Shall we end our days together ? "

The tenderness which Madame Claës now testified for her children nobly concealed much that she endeavored to hide from herself. Her children caused her neither fear nor passionate emotion : they were her comforters, but they were not her life : she lived by them ; she died through Balthazar. However painful her husband's presence might be to her, lost as he was for hours together in depths of thought from which he looked at her without seeing her, it was only during those cruel moments that she forgot her griefs. His indifference to the dying woman would have seemed criminal to a stranger, but Madame Claës and her daughters were accustomed to it ; they knew his heart and they

forgave him. If, during the daytime, Joséphine was seized by some sudden illness, if she were worse and seemed near dying, Claës was the only person in the house or in the town who remained ignorant of it. Lemulquinier knew it, but neither the daughters, bound to silence by their mother, nor Joséphine herself let Balthazar know the danger of the being he had once so passionately loved.

When his heavy step sounded in the gallery as he came to dinner, Madame Claës was happy — she was about to see him! and she gathered up her strength for that happiness. As he entered, the pallid face blushed brightly and recovered for an instant the semblance of health. Balthazar came to her bedside, took her hand, saw the misleading color on her cheek, and to him she seemed well. When he asked, “My dear wife, how are you to-day?” she answered, “Better, dear friend,” and made him think she would be up and recovered on the morrow. His preoccupation was so great that he accepted this reply, and believed the illness of which his wife was dying a mere indisposition. Dying to the eyes of the world, in his alone she was living.

A complete separation between husband and wife was the result of this year. Claës slept in a distant chamber, got up early in the morning, and shut himself into his laboratory or his study. Seeing his wife only in presence of his daughters or of the two or three

friends who came to visit them, he lost the habit of communicating with her. These two beings, formerly accustomed to think as one, no longer, unless at rare intervals, enjoyed those moments of communion, of passionate unreserve which feed the life of the heart; and finally there came a time when even these rare pleasures ceased. Physical suffering was now a boon to the poor woman, helping her to endure the void of separation, which might have killed her had she been truly living. Her bodily pain became so great that there were times when she was joyful in the thought that he whom she loved was not a witness of it. She lay watching Balthazar in the evening hours, and knowing him happy in his own way, she lived in the happiness she had procured for him, — a shadowy joy, and yet it satisfied her. She no longer asked herself if she were loved, she forced herself to believe it; and she glided over that icy surface, not daring to rest her weight upon it lest it should break and drown her soul in a gulf of awful nothingness.

No events stirred the calm of this existence; the malady that was slowly consuming Madame Claës added to the household stillness, and in this condition of passive gloom the House of Claës reached the first weeks of the year 1816. Pierquin, the lawyer, was destined, at the close of February, to strike the death-blow of the angelic woman who, in the words of the Abbé de Solis, was wellnigh without sin.

“Madame,” said Pierquin, seizing a moment when her daughters could not hear the conversation, “Monsieur Claës has directed me to borrow three hundred thousand francs on his property. You must do something to protect the future of your children.”

Madame Claës clasped her hands and raised her eyes to the ceiling; then she thanked the notary with a sad smile and a kindly motion of her head which affected him.

His words were the stab that killed her. During that day she had yielded herself up to sad reflections which swelled her heart; she was like the wayfarer walking beside a precipice who loses his balance and a mere pebble rolls him to the depth of the abyss he has so long and so courageously skirted. When the notary left her, Madame Claës told Marguerite to bring writing materials; then she gathered up her remaining strength to write her last wishes. Several times she paused and looked at her daughter. The hour of confidence had come.

Marguerite’s management of the household since her mother’s illness had so amply fulfilled the dying woman’s hopes that Madame Claës was able to look upon the future of the family without absolute despair, confident that she herself would live again in this strong and loving angel. Both women felt, no doubt, that sad and mutual confidences must be now made between

them; the daughter looked at the mother, the mother at the daughter, tears flowing from their eyes. Several times, as Madame Claës rested from her writing, Marguerite said: "Mother?" then she stopped as if choking; but the mother, occupied with her last thoughts, did not ask the meaning of the interrogation. At last, Madame Claës wished to seal the letter; Marguerite held the taper, turning aside her head that she might not see the superscription.

"You can read it, my child," said the mother, in a heart-rending voice.

The young girl read the words, "To my daughter Marguerite."

"We will talk to each other after I have rested awhile," said Madame Claës, putting the letter under her pillow.

Then she fell back as if exhausted by the effort, and slept for several hours. When she woke, her two daughters and her two sons were kneeling by her bed and praying. It was Thursday. Gabriel and Jean had been brought from school by Emmanuel de Solis, who for the last six months was professor of history and philosophy.

"Dear children, we must part!" she cried. "You have never forsaken me, never! and he who —"

She stopped.

"Monsieur Emmanuel," said Marguerite, seeing the

pallor on her mother's face, "go to my father, and tell him mamma is worse."

Young de Solis went to the door of the laboratory and persuaded Lemulquinier to make Balthazar come and speak to him. On hearing the urgent request of the young man, Claës answered, "I will come."

"Emmanuel," said Madame Claës when he returned to her, "take my sons away, and bring your uncle here. It is time to give me the last sacraments, and I wish to receive them from his hand."

When she was alone with her daughters she made a sign to Marguerite, who understood her and sent Félicie away.

"I have something to say to you myself, dear mamma," said Marguerite who, not believing her mother so ill as she really was, increased the wound Pierquin had given. "I have had no money for the household expenses during the last ten days; I owe six months' wages to the servants. Twice I have tried to ask my father for money, but did not dare to do so. You don't know, perhaps, that all the pictures in the gallery have been sold, and all the wines in the cellar?"

"He never told me!" exclaimed Madame Claës. "My God! thou callest me to thyself in time! My poor children! what will become of them?"

She made a fervent prayer, which brought the fires of repentance to her eyes.

“Marguerite,” she resumed, drawing the letter from her pillow, “here is a paper which you must not open or read until a time, after my death, when some great disaster has overtaken you; when, in short, you are without the means of living. My dear Marguerite, love your father, but take care of your brothers and your sister. In a few days, in a few hours perhaps, you will be the head of this household. Be economical. Should you find yourself opposed to the wishes of your father, — and it may so happen, because he has spent vast sums in searching for a secret whose discovery is to bring glory and wealth to his family, and he will no doubt need money, perhaps he may demand it of you, — should that time come, treat him with the tenderness of a daughter, strive to reconcile the interests of which you will be the sole protector with the duty which you owe to a father, to a great man who has sacrificed his happiness and his life to the glory of his family; he can only do wrong in act, his intentions are noble, his heart is full of love; you will see him once more kind and affectionate — *You!* Marguerite, it is my duty to say these words to you on the borders of the grave. If you wish to soften the anguish of my death, promise me, my child, to take my place beside your father; to cause him no grief; never to reproach him; never to condemn him. Be a gentle, considerate guardian of the home until — his work accomplished — he is again the master of his family.”

“I understand you, dear mother,” said Marguerite, kissing the swollen eyelids of the dying woman. “I will do as you wish.”

“Do not marry, my darling, until Gabriel can succeed you in the management of the property and the household. If you married, your husband might not share your feelings, he might bring trouble into the family and disturb your father’s life.”

Marguerite looked at her mother and said, “Have you nothing else to say to me about my marriage?”

“Can you hesitate, my child?” cried the dying woman in alarm.

“No,” the daughter answered; “I promise to obey you.”

“Poor girl! I did not sacrifice myself for you,” said the mother, shedding hot tears. “Yet I ask you to sacrifice yourself for all. Happiness makes us selfish. Yes, Marguerite, I have been weak because I was happy. Be strong; preserve your own good sense to guard others who as yet have none. Act so that your brothers and your sister may not reproach my memory. Love your father, and do not oppose him — too much.”

She laid her head on her pillow and said no more; her strength was gone; the inward struggle between the Wife and the Mother had been too violent.

A few moments later the clergy came, preceded by the Abbé de Solis, and the parlor was filled by the

children and the household. When the ceremony was about to begin, Madame Claës, awakened by her confessor, looked about her and not seeing Balthazar said quickly, —

“Where is my husband?”

The words — summing up, as it were, her life and her death — were uttered in such lamentable tones that all present shuddered. Martha, in spite of her great age, darted out of the room, ran up the staircase and through the gallery, and knocked loudly on the door of the laboratory.

“Monsieur, madame is dying; they are waiting for you, to administer the last sacraments,” she cried with the violence of indignation.

“I am coming,” answered Balthazar.

Lemulquinier came down a moment later, and said his master was following him. Madame Claës’s eyes never left the parlor door, but her husband did not appear until the ceremony was over. When at last he entered, Joséphine colored and a few tears rolled down her cheeks.

“Were you trying to decompose nitrogen?” she said to him with an angelic tenderness which made the spectators quiver.

“I have done it!” he cried joyfully; “Nitrogen contains oxygen and a substance of the nature of imponderable matter, which is apparently the principle of —”

A murmur of horror interrupted his words and brought him to his senses.

“What did they tell me?” he demanded. “Are you worse? What is the matter?”

“This is the matter, monsieur,” whispered the Abbé de Solis, indignant at his conduct; “your wife is dying, and you have killed her.”

Without waiting for an answer the abbé took the arm of his nephew and went out followed by the family, who accompanied him to the court-yard. Balthazar stood as if thunderstruck; he looked at his wife, and a few tears dropped from his eyes.

“You are dying, and I have killed you!” he said. “What does he mean?”

“My husband,” she answered, “I only lived in your love, and you have taken my life away from me; but you knew not what you did.”

“Leave us,” said Claës to his children, who now re-entered the room. “Have I for one moment ceased to love you?” he went on, sitting down beside his wife, and taking her hands and kissing them.

“My friend, I do not blame you. You made me happy — too happy, for I have not been able to bear the contrast between our early married life, so full of joy, and these last days, so desolate, so empty, when you are not yourself. The life of the heart, like the life of the body, has its functions. For six years you

have been dead to love, to the family, to all that was once our happiness. I will not speak of our early married days ; such joys must cease in the after-time of life, but they ripen into fruits which feed the soul, — confidence unlimited, the tender habits of affection : you have torn those treasures from me ! I go in time : we live together no longer ; you hide your thoughts and actions from me. How is it that you fear me ? Have I ever given you one word, one look, one gesture of reproach ? And yet, you have sold your last pictures, you have sold even the wine in your cellar, you are borrowing money on your property, and have said no word to me. Ah ! I go from life weary of life. If you are doing wrong, if you delude yourself in following the unattainable, have I not shown you that my love could share your faults, could walk beside you and be happy, though you led me in the paths of crime ? You loved me too well, — that was my glory ; it is now my death. Balthazar, my illness has lasted long ; it began on the day when here, in this place where I am about to die, you showed me that Science was more to you than Family. And now the end has come ; your wife is dying, and your fortune lost. Fortune and wife were yours, — you could do what you willed with your own ; but on the day of my death my property goes to my children, and you cannot touch it ; what will then become of you ? I am telling you the truth ; I owe it to you. Dying

eyes see far: when I am gone will anything outweigh that cursed passion which is now your life? If you have sacrificed your wife, your children will count but little in the scale; for I must be just and own you loved me above all. Two millions and six years of toil you have cast into the gulf, — and what have you found?”

At these words Claës grasped his whitened head in his hands and hid his face.

“Humiliation for yourself, misery for your children,” continued the dying woman. “You are called in derision ‘Claës the alchemist;’ soon it will be ‘Claës the madman.’ For myself, I believe in you. I know you great and wise; I know your genius: but to the vulgar eye genius is mania. Fame is a sun that lights the dead; living, you will be unhappy with the unhappiness of great minds, and your children will be ruined. I go before I see your fame, which might have brought me consolation for my lost happiness. Oh, Balthazar! make my death less bitter to me, let me be certain that my children will not want for bread — Ah, nothing, nothing, not even you, can calm my fears.”

“I swear,” said Claës, “to —”

“No, do not swear, that you may not fail of your oath,” she said, interrupting him. “You owed us your protection; we have been without it seven years. Science is your life. A great man should have neither wife nor children; he should tread alone the path of

sacrifice. His virtues are not the virtues of common men ; he belongs to the universe, he cannot belong to wife or family ; he sucks up the moisture of the earth about him, like a majestic tree — and I, poor plant, I could not rise to the height of your life, I die at its feet. I have waited for this last day to tell you these dreadful thoughts : they came to me in the lightnings of desolation and anguish. Oh, spare my children ! let these words echo in your heart. I cry them to you with my last breath. The wife is dead, dead ; you have stripped her slowly, gradually, of her feelings, of her joys. Alas ! without that cruel care could I have lived so long ? But those poor children did not forsake me ! they have grown beside my anguish, the mother still survives. Spare them ! Spare my children ! ”

“ Lemulquinier ! ” cried Claës in a voice of thunder.

The old man appeared.

“ Go up and destroy all — instruments, apparatus, everything ! Be careful, but destroy all. I renounce Science,” he said to his wife.

“ Too late,” she answered, looking at Lemulquinier.

“ Marguerite ! ” she cried, feeling herself about to die.

Marguerite came through the doorway and uttered a piercing cry as she saw her mother’s eyes now glazing.

“ MARGUERITE ! ” repeated the dying woman.

The exclamation contained so powerful an appeal to her daughter, she invested that appeal with such

authority, that the cry was like a dying bequest. The terrified family ran to her side and saw her die; the vital forces were exhausted in that last conversation with her husband.

Balthazar and Marguerite stood motionless, she at the head, he at the foot of the bed, unable to believe in the death of the woman whose virtues and exhaustless tenderness were known fully to them alone. Father and daughter exchanged looks freighted with meaning: the daughter judged the father, and already the father trembled, foreseeing in his daughter an instrument of vengeance. Though memories of the love with which his Pépita had filled his life crowded upon his mind, and gave to her dying words a sacred authority whose voice his soul must ever hear, yet Balthazar knew himself helpless in the grasp of his attendant genius; he heard the terrible mutterings of his passion, denying him the strength to carry his repentance into action: he feared himself.

When the grave had closed upon Madame Claës, one thought filled the minds of all, — the house had had a soul, and that soul was now departed. The grief of the family was so intense that the parlor, where the noble woman still seemed to linger, was closed; no one had the courage to enter it.

X.

SOCIETY practises none of the virtues it demands from individuals: every hour it commits crimes, but the crimes are committed in words; it paves the way for evil actions with a jest; it degrades nobility of soul by ridicule; it jeers at sons who mourn their fathers, anathematizes those who do not mourn them enough, and finds diversion (the hypocrite!) in weighing the dead bodies before they are cold.

The evening of the day on which Madame Claës died, her friends cast a few flowers upon her memory in the intervals of their games of whist, doing homage to her noble qualities as they sorted their hearts and spades. Then, after a few lachrymal phrases, — the fi, fo, fum of collective grief, uttered in precisely the same tone, and with neither more nor less of feeling, at all hours and in every town in France, — they proceeded to estimate the value of her property. Pierquin was the first to observe that the death of this excellent woman was a mercy, for her husband had made her unhappy; and it was even more fortunate for her children: she was unable while living to refuse her money to the husband

she adored; but now that she was dead, Claës was debarred from touching it. Thereupon all present calculated the fortune of that poor Madame Claës, wondered how much she had laid by (had she, in fact, laid by anything?), made an inventory of her jewels, rummaged in her wardrobe, peeped into her drawers, while the afflicted family were still weeping and praying around her death-bed.

Pierquin, with an appraising eye, stated that Madame Claës's possessions in her own right — to use the notarial phrase — might still be recovered, and ought to amount to nearly a million and a half of francs; basing this estimate partly on the forest of Waignies, — whose timber, counting the full-grown trees, the saplings, the primeval growths, and the recent plantations, had immensely increased in value during the last twelve years, — and partly on Balthazar's own property, of which enough remained to "cover" the claims of his children, if the liquidation of their mother's fortune did not yield sufficient to release him. Mademoiselle Claës was still, in Pierquin's slang, "a four-hundred-thousand-franc girl." "But," he added, "if she does n't marry, — a step which would of course separate her interests and permit us to sell the forest at auction, and so realize the property of the minor children and reinvest it where the father can't lay hands on it, — Claës is likely to ruin them all."

Thereupon, everybody looked about for some eligible young man worthy to win the hand of Mademoiselle Claës ; but none of them paid the lawyer the compliment of suggesting that he might be the man. Pierquin, however, found so many good reasons to reject the suggested matches as unworthy of Marguerite's position, that the confabulators glanced at each other and smiled, and took malicious pleasure in prolonging this truly provincial method of annoyance. Pierquin had already decided that Madame Claës's death would have a favorable effect upon his suit, and he began mentally to cut up the body in his own interests.

"That good woman," he said to himself as he went home to bed, "was as proud as a peacock ; she would never have given me her daughter. Hey, hey ! why could n't I manage matters now so as to marry the girl ? Père Claës is drunk on carbon, and takes no care of his children. If, after convincing Marguerite that she must marry to save the property of her brothers and sister, I were to ask him for his daughter, he will be glad to get rid of a girl who is likely to thwart him."

He went to sleep anticipating the charms of the marriage contract, and reflecting on the advantages of the step and the guarantees afforded for his happiness in the person he proposed to marry. In all the provinces there was certainly not a better brought-up or more delicately lovely young girl than Mademoiselle Claës. Her

modesty, her grace, were like those of the pretty flower Emmanuel had feared to name lest he should betray the secret of his heart. Her sentiments were lofty, her principles religious, she would undoubtedly make him a faithful wife: moreover, she not only flattered the vanity which influences every man more or less in the choice of a wife, but she gratified his pride by the high consideration which her family, doubly ennobled, enjoyed in Flanders, — a consideration which her husband of course would share.

The next day Pierquin extracted from his strong-box several thousand-franc notes, which he offered with great friendliness to Balthazar, so as to relieve him of pecuniary annoyance in the midst of his grief. Touched by this delicate attention, Balthazar would, he thought, praise his goodness and his personal qualities to Marguerite. In this he was mistaken. Monsieur Claës and his daughter thought it was a very natural action, and their sorrow was too absorbing to let them even think of the lawyer.

Balthazar's despair was indeed so great that persons who were disposed to blame his conduct could not do otherwise than forgive him, — less on account of the Science which might have excused him, than for the remorse which could not undo his deeds. Society is satisfied by appearances: it takes what it gives, without considering the intrinsic worth of the article. To

the world real suffering is a show, a species of enjoyment, which inclines it to absolve even a criminal; in its thirst for emotions it acquits without judging the man who raises a laugh, or he who makes it weep, making no inquiry into their methods.

Marguerite was just nineteen when her father put her in charge of the household; and her brothers and sister, whom Madame Claës in her last moments exhorted to obey their elder sister, accepted her authority with docility. Her mourning attire heightened the dewy whiteness of her skin, just as the sadness of her expression threw into relief the gentleness and patience of her manner. From the first she gave proofs of feminine courage, of inalterable serenity, like that of angels appointed to shed peace on suffering hearts by a touch of their waving palms. But although she trained herself, through a premature perception of duty, to hide her personal grief, it was none the less bitter; her calm exterior was not in keeping with the deep trouble of her thoughts, and she was destined to undergo, too early in life, those terrible outbursts of feeling which no heart is able wholly to subdue: her father was to hold her incessantly under the pressure of natural youthful generosity on the one hand, and the dictates of imperious duty on the other. The cares which came upon her the very day of her mother's death threw her into a struggle with the interests of life at an age when young girls are

thinking only of its pleasures. Dreadful discipline of suffering, which is never lacking to angelic natures !

The love which rests on money or on vanity is the most persevering of passions. Pierquin resolved to win the heiress without delay. A few days after Madame Claës's death he took occasion to speak to Marguerite, and began operations with a cleverness which might have succeeded if love had not given her the power of clear insight and saved her from mistaking appearances that were all the more specious because Pierquin displayed his natural kindheartedness, — the kindliness of a notary who thinks himself loving while he protects a client's money. Relying on his rather distant relationship and his constant habit of managing the business and sharing the secrets of the Claës family, sure of the esteem and friendship of the father, greatly assisted by the careless inattention of that servant of science who took no thought for the marriage of his daughter, and not suspecting that Marguerite could prefer another, — Pierquin unguardedly enabled her to form a judgment on a suit in which there was no passion except that of self-interest, always odious to a young soul, and which he was not clever enough to conceal. It was he who on this occasion was naïvely above-board, it was she who dissimulated, — simply because he thought he was dealing with a defenceless girl, and wholly misconceived the privileges of weakness.

“ My dear cousin,” he said to Marguerite, with whom he was walking about the paths of the little garden, “ you know my heart, you understand how truly I desire to respect the painful feelings which absorb you at this moment. I have too sensitive a nature for a lawyer ; I live by my heart only, I am forced to spend my time on the interests of others when I would fain let myself enjoy the sweet emotions which make life happy. I suffer deeply in being obliged to talk to you of subjects so discordant with your state of mind, but it is necessary. I have thought much about you during the last few days. It is evident that through a fatal delusion the fortune of your brothers and sister and your own are in jeopardy. Do you wish to save your family from complete ruin ? ”

“ What must I do ? ” she asked, half-frightened by his words.

“ Marry,” answered Pierquin.

“ I shall not marry,” she said.

“ Yes, you will marry,” replied the notary, “ when you have soberly thought over the critical position in which you are placed.”

“ How can my marriage save — ”

“ Ah ! I knew you would consider it, my dear cousin,” he exclaimed, interrupting her. “ Marriage will emancipate you.”

“ Why should I be emancipated ? ” asked Marguerite.

“Because marriage will put you at once into possession of your property, my dear little cousin,” said the lawyer in a tone of triumph. “If you marry you take your share of your mother’s property. To give it to you, the whole property must be liquidated; to do that, it becomes necessary to sell the forest of Waignies. That done, the proceeds will be capitalized, and your father, as guardian, will be compelled to invest the fortune of his children in such a way that Chemistry can’t get hold of it.”

“And if I do not marry, what will happen?” she asked.

“Well,” said the notary, “your father will manage your estate as he pleases. If he returns to making gold, he will probably sell the timber of the forest of Waignies and leave his children as naked as the little Saint Johns. The forest is now worth about fourteen hundred thousand francs; but from one day to another you are not sure your father won’t cut it down, and then your thirteen hundred acres are not worth three hundred thousand francs. Isn’t it better to avoid this almost certain danger by at once compelling the division of property on your marriage? If the forest is sold now, while Chemistry has gone to sleep, your father will put the proceeds on the Grand-Livre. The Funds are at 59; those dear children will get nearly five thousand francs a year for every fifty thousand

frances: and, inasmuch as the property of minors cannot be sold out, your brothers and sister will find their fortunes doubled in value by the time they come of age. Whereas, in the other case, — faith, no one knows what may happen: your father has already impaired your mother's property; we shall find out the deficit when we come to make the inventory. If he is in debt to her estate, you will take a mortgage on his, and in that way something may be recovered — ”

“ For shame ! ” said Marguerite. “ It would be an outrage on my father. It is not so long since my mother uttered her last words that I have forgotten them. My father is incapable of robbing his children,” she continued, giving way to tears of distress. “ You misunderstand him, Monsieur Pierquin.”

“ But, my dear cousin, if your father gets back to chemistry — ”

“ We are ruined ; is that what you mean ? ”

“ Yes, utterly ruined. Believe me, Marguerite,” he said, taking her hand which he placed upon his heart, “ I should fail of my duty if I did not persist in this matter. Your interests alone — ”

“ Monsieur,” said Marguerite, coldly withdrawing her hand, “ the true interests of my family require me not to marry. My mother thought so.”

“ Cousin,” he cried, with the earnestness of a man

who sees a fortune escaping him, "you commit suicide; you fling your mother's property into a gulf. Well, I will prove the devotion I feel for you: you know not how I love you. I have admired you from the day of that last ball, three years ago; you were enchanting. Trust the voice of love when it speaks to you of your own interests, Marguerite." He paused. "Yes, we must call a family council and emancipate you — without consulting you," he added.

"But what is it to be emancipated?"

"It is to enjoy your own rights."

"If I can be emancipated without being married, why do you want me to marry? and whom should I marry?"

Pierquin tried to look tenderly at his cousin, but the expression contrasted so strongly with his hard eyes, usually fixed on money, that Marguerite discovered the self-interest in his improvised tenderness.

"You would marry the person who — pleases you — the most," he said. "A husband is indispensable, were it only as a matter of business. You are now entering upon a struggle with your father; can you resist him all alone?"

"Yes, monsieur; I shall know how to protect my brothers and sister when the time comes."

"Pshaw! the obstinate creature," thought Pierquin. "No, you will not resist him," he said aloud.

“Let us end the subject,” she said.

“Adieu, cousin, I shall endeavor to serve you in spite of yourself; I will prove my love by protecting you against your will from a disaster which all the town foresees.”

“I thank you for the interest you take in me,” she answered; “but I entreat you to propose nothing and to undertake nothing which may give pain to my father.”

Marguerite stood thoughtfully watching Pierquin as he departed; she compared his metallic voice, his manners, flexible as a steel spring, his glance, servile rather than tender, with the mute melodious poetry in which Emmanuel’s sentiments were wrapped. No matter what may be said, or what may be done, there exists a wonderful magnetism whose effects never deceive. The tones of the voice, the glance, the passionate gestures of a lover may be imitated; a young girl can be deluded by a clever comedian; but to succeed, the man must be alone in the field. If the young girl has another soul beside her whose pulses vibrate in unison with hers, she is able to distinguish the expressions of a true love. Emmanuel, like Marguerite, felt the influence of the clouds which, from the time of their first meeting had gathered ominously about their heads, hiding from their eyes the blue skies of love. His feeling for the Elect of his

heart was an idolatry which the total absence of hope rendered gentle and mysterious in its manifestations. Socially too far removed from Mademoiselle Claës by his want of fortune, with nothing but a noble name to offer her, he saw no chance of ever being her husband. Yet he had always hoped for certain encouragements which Marguerite refused to give before the failing eyes of her dying mother. Both equally pure, they had never said to one another a word of love. Their joys were solitary joys tasted by each alone. They trembled apart, though together they quivered beneath the rays of the same hope. They seemed to fear themselves, conscious that each only too surely belonged to the other. Emmanuel trembled lest he should touch the hand of the sovereign to whom he had made a shrine in his heart; a chance contact would have roused hopes that were too ardent, he could not then have mastered the force of his passion. And yet, while neither bestowed the vast, though trivial, the innocent and yet all-meaning signs of love that even timid lovers allow themselves, they were so firmly fixed in each other's hearts that both were ready to make the greatest sacrifices, which were, indeed, the only pleasures their love could expect to taste.

Since Madame Claës's death this hidden love was shrouded in mourning. The tints of the sphere in which it lived, dark and dim from the first, were now black;

the few lights were veiled by tears. Marguerite's reserve changed to coldness; she remembered the promise exacted by her mother. With more freedom of action, she nevertheless became more distant. Emmanuel shared his beloved's grief, comprehending that the slightest word or wish of love at such a time transgressed the laws of the heart. Their love was therefore more concealed than it had ever been. These tender souls sounded the same note: held apart by grief, as formerly by the timidities of youth and by respect for the sufferings of the mother, they clung to the magnificent language of the eyes, the mute eloquence of devoted actions, the constant unison of thoughts, — divine harmonies of youth, the first steps of a love still in its infancy. Emmanuel came every morning to inquire for Claës and Marguerite, but he never entered the dining-room, where the family now sat, unless to bring a letter from Gabriel or when Balthazar invited him to come in. His first glance at the young girl contained a thousand sympathetic thoughts; it told her that he suffered under these conventional restraints, that he never left her, he was always with her, he shared her grief. He shed the tears of his own pain into the soul of his dear one by a look that was marred by no selfish reservation. His good heart lived so completely in the present, he clung so firmly to a happiness which he believed to be fugitive, that Marguerite sometimes reproached herself for

not generously holding out her hand and saying, "Let us at least be friends."

Pierquin continued his suit with an obstinacy which is the unreflecting patience of fools. He judged Marguerite by the ordinary rules of the multitude when judging of women. He believed that the words marriage, freedom, fortune, which he had put into her mind, would germinate and flower into wishes by which he could profit; he imagined that her coldness was mere dissimulation. But surround her as he would with gallant attentions, he could not hide the despotic ways of a man accustomed to manage the private affairs of many families with a high hand. He discoursed to her in those platitudes of consolation common to his profession, which crawl like snails over the suffering mind, leaving behind them a trail of barren words which profane its sanctity. His tenderness was mere wheedling. He dropped his feigned melancholy at the door when he put on his overshoes, or took his umbrella. He used the tone his long intimacy authorized as an instrument to work himself still further into the bosom of the family, and bring Marguerite to a marriage which the whole town was beginning to foresee. The true, devoted, respectful, love formed a striking contrast to its selfish, calculating semblance. Each man's conduct was homogeneous: one feigned a passion and seized every advantage to obtain the prize; the other

hid his love and trembled lest he should betray his devotion.

Some time after the death of her mother, and, as it happened, on the same day, Marguerite was enabled to compare the only two men of whom she had any opportunity of judging ; for the social solitude to which she was condemned kept her from seeing life and gave no access to those who might think of her in marriage. One day after breakfast, on a fine morning in April, Emmanuel called at the house just as Monsieur Claës was going out. The aspect of his own house was so unendurable to Balthazar that he spent part of every day in walking about the ramparts. Emmanuel made a motion as if to follow him, then he hesitated, seemed to gather up his courage, looked at Marguerite and remained. The young girl felt sure that he wished to speak with her, and asked him to go into the garden ; then she sent Félicie to Martha, who was sewing in the antechamber on the upper floor, and seated herself on a garden-seat in full view of her sister and the old duenna.

“ Monsieur Claës is as much absorbed by grief as he once was by science,” began the young man, watching Balthazar as he slowly crossed the court-yard. “ Every one in Douai pities him ; he moves like a man who has lost all consciousness of life ; he stops without a purpose, he gazes without seeing anything.”

“Every sorrow has its own expression,” said Marguerite, checking her tears. “What is it you wish to say to me ?” she added after a pause, coldly and with dignity.

“Mademoiselle,” answered Emmanuel in a voice of feeling, “I scarcely know if I have the right to speak to you as I am about to do ? Think only of my desire to be of service to you, and give me the right of a teacher to be interested in the future of a pupil. Your brother Gabriel is over fifteen ; he is in the second class ; it is now necessary to direct his studies in the line of whatever future career he may take up. It is for your father to decide what that career shall be : if he gives the matter no thought, the injury to Gabriel will be serious. But then, again, would it not mortify your father if you showed him that he is neglecting his son’s interests ? Under these circumstances, could you not yourself consult Gabriel as to his tastes, and help him to choose a career, so that later, if his father should think of making him a public officer, an administrator, a soldier, he might be prepared with some special training ? I do not suppose that either you or Monsieur Claës would wish to bring Gabriel up in idleness.”

“Oh, no !” said Marguerite ; “when my mother taught us to make lace, and took such pains with our drawing and music and embroidery, she often said

we must be prepared for whatever might happen to us. Gabriel ought to have a thorough education and a personal value. But tell me, what career is the best for a man to choose?"

"Mademoiselle," said Emmanuel, trembling with pleasure, "Gabriel is at the head of his class in mathematics; if he would like to enter the *École Polytechnique*, he could there acquire the practical knowledge which will fit him for any career. When he leaves the *École* he can choose the path in life for which he feels the strongest bias. Thus, without compromising his future, you will have saved a great deal of time. Men who leave the *École* with honors are sought after on all sides; the school turns out statesmen, diplomats, men of science, engineers, generals, sailors, magistrates, manufacturers, and bankers. There is nothing extraordinary in the son of a rich or noble family preparing himself to enter it. If Gabriel decides on this course I shall ask you to — will you grant my request? Say yes!"

"What is it?"

"Let me be his tutor," he answered, trembling.

Marguerite looked at Monsieur de Solis; then she took his hand, and said, "Yes" — and paused, adding presently in a broken voice: —

"How much I value the delicacy which makes you offer me a thing I can accept from you. In all

that you have said I see how much you have thought for us. I thank you."

Though the words were simply said, Emmanuel turned away his head not to show the tears that the delight of being useful to her brought to his eyes.

"I will bring both boys to see you," he said, when he was a little calmer; "to-morrow is a holiday."

He rose and bowed to Marguerite, who followed him into the house; when he had crossed the court-yard he turned and saw her still at the door of the dining-room, from which she made him a friendly sign.

After dinner Pierquin came to see Monsieur Claës, and sat down between father and daughter on the very bench in the garden where Emmanuel had sat that morning.

"My dear cousin," he said to Balthazar, "I have come to-night to talk to you on business. It is now forty-two days since the decease of your wife."

"I keep no account of time," said Balthazar, wiping away the tears that came at the word "decease."

"Oh, monsieur!" cried Marguerite, looking at the lawyer, "how can you?"

"But, my dear Marguerite, we notaries are obliged to consider the limits of time appointed by law. This is a matter which concerns you and your co-heirs. Monsieur Claës has none but minor children, and he must make an inventory of his property within forty-

five days of his wife's decease, so as to render in his accounts at the end of that time. It is necessary to know the value of his property before deciding whether to accept it as sufficient security, or whether we must fall back on the legal rights of minors."

Marguerite rose.

"Do not go away, my dear cousin," continued Pierquin; "my words concern you — you and your father both. You know how truly I share your grief, but to-day you must give your attention to legal details. If you do not, every one of you will get into serious difficulties. I am only doing my duty as the family lawyer."

"He is right," said Claës.

"The time expires in two days," resumed Pierquin; "and I must begin the inventory to-morrow, if only to postpone the payment of the legacy-tax which the public treasurer will come here and demand. Treasurers have no hearts; they don't trouble themselves about feelings; they fasten their claws upon us at all seasons. Therefore for the next two days my clerk and I will be here from ten till four with Monsieur Raparlier, the public appraiser. After we get through the town property we shall go into the country. As for the forest of Waignies, we shall be obliged to hold a consultation about that. Now let us turn to another matter. We must call a family council and appoint a guardian to

protect the interests of the minor children. Monsieur Conyncks of Bruges is your nearest relative; but he has now become a Belgian. You ought," continued Pierquin, addressing Balthazar, "to write to him on this matter; you can then find out if he has any intention of settling in France, where he has a fine property. Perhaps you could persuade him and his daughter to move into French Flanders. If he refuses, then I must see about making up the council with the other near relatives."

"What is the use of an inventory?" asked Marguerite.

"To put on record the value and the claims of the property, its debts and its assets. When that is all clearly scheduled, the family council, acting on behalf of the minors, makes such dispositions as it sees fit."

"Pierquin," said Claës, rising from the bench, "do all that is necessary to protect the rights of my children; but spare us the distress of selling the things that belonged to my dear—" he was unable to continue; but he spoke with so noble an air and in a tone of such deep feeling that Marguerite took her father's hand and kissed it.

"To-morrow, then," said Pierquin.

"Come to breakfast," said Claës; then he seemed to gather his scattered senses together and exclaimed:

“But in my marriage contract, which was drawn under the laws of Hainault, I released my wife from the obligation of making an inventory, in order that she might not be annoyed by it: it is very probable that I was equally released — ”

“Oh, what happiness!” cried Marguerite. “It would have been so distressing to us.”

“Well, I will look into your marriage contract to-morrow,” said the notary, rather confused.

“Then you did not know of this?” said Marguerite.

This remark closed the interview; the lawyer was far too much confused to continue it after the young girl’s comment.

“The devil is in it!” he said to himself as he crossed the court-yard. “That man’s wandering memory comes back to him in the nick of time, — just when he needed it to hinder us from taking precautions against him! I have cracked my brains to save the property of those children. I meant to proceed regularly and come to an understanding with old Conyncks, and here’s the end of it! I shall lose ground with Marguerite, for she will certainly ask her father why I wanted an inventory of the property, which she now sees was not necessary; and Claës will tell her that notaries have a passion for writing documents, that we are lawyers above all, above cousins or friends or relatives, and all such stuff as that.”

He slammed the street door violently, railing at clients who ruin themselves by sensitiveness.

Balthazar was right. No inventory could be made. Nothing, therefore, was done to settle the relation of the father to the children in the matter of property.

XI.

SEVERAL months went by and brought no change to the House of Claës. Gabriel, under the wise management of his tutor, Monsieur de Solis, worked studiously, acquired foreign languages, and prepared to pass the necessary examinations to enter the *École Polytechnique*. Marguerite and Félicie lived in absolute retirement, going in summer to their father's country place as a measure of economy. Monsieur Claës attended to his business affairs, paid his debts by borrowing a considerable sum of money on his property, and went to see the forest at Waignies.

About the middle of the year 1817, his grief, slowly abating, left him a prey to solitude and defenceless under the monotony of the life he was leading, which heavily oppressed him. At first he struggled bravely against the allurements of Science as they gradually beset him ; he forbade himself even to think of Chemistry. Then he did think of it. Still, he would not actively take it up, and only gave his mind to his researches theoretically. Such constant study, however, swelled his passion which soon became exacting. He asked

himself whether he was really bound not to continue his researches, and remembered that his wife had refused his oath. Though he had pledged his word to himself that he would never pursue the solution of the great Problem, might he not change that determination at a moment when he foresaw success? He was now fifty-nine years old. At that age a predominant idea contracts a certain peevish fixedness which is the first stage of monomania.

Circumstances conspired against his tottering loyalty. The peace which Europe now enjoyed encouraged the circulation of discoveries and scientific ideas acquired during the war by the learned of various countries, who for nearly twenty years had been unable to hold communication. Science was making great strides. Claës found that the progress of chemistry had been directed, unknown to chemists themselves, towards the object of his researches. Learned men devoted to the higher sciences thought, as he did, that light, heat, electricity, galvanism, magnetism were all different effects of the same cause, and that the difference existing between substances hitherto considered simple must be produced by varying proportions of an unknown principle. The fear that some other chemist might effect the reduction of metals and discover the constituent principle of electricity, — two achievements which would lead to the solution of the chemical Absolute, —

increased what the people of Douai called a mania, and drove his desires to a paroxysm conceivable to those who devote themselves to the sciences, or who have ever known the tyranny of ideas.

Thus it happened that Balthazar was again carried away by a passion all the more violent because it had lain dormant so long. Marguerite, who watched every evidence of her father's state of mind, opened the long-closed parlor. By living in it she recalled the painful memories which her mother's death had caused, and succeeded for a time in re-awaking her father's grief, and retarding his plunge into the gulf to the depths of which he was, nevertheless, doomed to fall. She determined to go into society and force Balthazar to share in its distractions. Several good marriages were proposed to her, which occupied Claës's mind, but to all of them she replied that she should not marry until after she was twenty-five. But in spite of his daughter's efforts, in spite of his remorseful struggles, Balthazar, at the beginning of the winter, returned secretly to his researches. It was difficult, however, to hide his operations from the inquisitive women in the kitchen; and one morning Martha, while dressing Marguerite, said to her:—

“Mademoiselle, we are as good as lost. That monster of a Mulquinier—who is a devil disguised, for I never saw him make the sign of the cross—has gone

back to the garret. There's monsieur on the high-road to hell. Pray God he may n't kill you as he killed my poor mistress."

"It is not possible!" exclaimed Marguerite.

"Come and see the signs of their traffic."

Mademoiselle Claës ran to the window and saw the light smoke rising from the flue of the laboratory.

"I shall be twenty-one in a few months," she thought, "and I shall know how to oppose the destruction of our property."

In giving way to his passion Balthazar necessarily felt less respect for the interests of his children than he formerly had felt for the happiness of his wife. The barriers were less high, his conscience was more elastic, his passion had increased in strength. He now set forth in his career of glory, toil, hope, and poverty, with the fervor of a man profoundly trustful of his convictions. Certain of the result, he worked night and day with a fury that alarmed his daughters, who did not know how little a man is injured by work that gives him pleasure.

Her father had no sooner recommenced his experiments than Marguerite retrenched the superfluities of the table, showing a parsimony worthy of a miser, in which Josette and Martha admirably seconded her. Claës never noticed the change which reduced the household living to the merest necessities. First he

ceased to breakfast with the family ; then he only left his laboratory when dinner was ready ; and at last, before he went to bed, he would sit some hours in the parlor between his daughters without saying a word to either of them ; when he rose to go upstairs they wished him good-night, and he allowed them mechanically to kiss him on both cheeks. Such conduct would have led to great domestic misfortunes had Marguerite not been prepared to exercise the authority of a mother, and if, moreover, she were not protected by a secret love from the dangers of so much liberty.

Pierquin had ceased to come to the house, judging that the family ruin would soon be complete. Balthazar's rural estates, which yielded sixteen thousand francs a year, and were worth about six hundred thousand, were now encumbered by mortgages to the amount of three hundred thousand francs ; for, in order to recommence his researches, Claës had borrowed a considerable sum of money. The rents were exactly enough to pay the interest of the mortgages ; but, with the improvidence of a man who is the slave of an idea, he made over the income from his farm lands to Marguerite for the expenses of the household, and the notary calculated that three years would suffice to bring matters to a crisis, when the law would step in and eat up all that Balthazar had not squandered. Marguerite's coldness brought Pierquin to a state of almost hostile

indifference. To give himself an appearance in the eyes of the world of having renounced her hand, he frequently remarked of the Claës family in a tone of compassion : —

“ Those poor people are ruined ; I have done my best to save them. Well, it can't be helped ; Mademoiselle Claës refused to employ the legal means which might have rescued them from poverty.”

Emmanuel de Solis, who was now principal of the college-school in Douai, thanks to the influence of his uncle and to his own merits which made him worthy of the post, came every evening to see the two young girls, who called the old duenna into the parlor as soon as their father had gone to bed. Emmanuel's gentle rap at the street-door was never missing. For the last three months, encouraged by the gracious, though mute gratitude with which Marguerite now accepted his attentions, he became at his ease, and was seen for what he was. The brightness of his pure spirit shone like a flawless diamond ; Marguerite learned to understand its strength and its constancy when she saw how inexhaustible was the source from which it came. She loved to watch the unfolding, one by one, of the blossoms of his heart, whose perfume she had already breathed. Each day Emmanuel realized some one of Marguerite's hopes, and illumined the enchanted regions of love with new lights that chased away the clouds and brought to view

the serene heavens, giving color to the fruitful riches hidden away in the shadow of their lives. More at his ease, the young man could display the seductive qualities of his heart until now discreetly hidden, the expansive gayety of his age, the simplicity which comes of a life of study, the treasures of a delicate mind that life has not adulterated, the innocent joyousness which goes so well with loving youth. His soul and Marguerite's understood each other better; they went together to the depths of their hearts and found in each the same thoughts, — pearls of equal lustre, sweet fresh harmonies like those the legends tell of beneath the waves, which fascinate the divers. They made themselves known to one another by an interchange of thought, a reciprocal introspection which bore the signs, in both, of exquisite sensibility. It was done without false shame, but not without mutual coquetry. The two hours which Emmanuel spent with the sisters and old Martha enabled Marguerite to accept the life of anguish and renunciation on which she had entered. This artless, progressive love was her support. In all his testimonies of affection Emmanuel showed the natural grace that is so winning, the sweet yet subtile mind which breaks the uniformity of sentiment as the facets of a diamond relieve, by their many-sided fires, the monotony of the stone, — adorable wisdom, the secret of loving hearts, which makes a woman pliant to the artistic hand that gives new life to

old, old forms, and refreshes with novel modulations the phrases of love. Love is not only a sentiment, it is an art. Some simple word, a trifling vigilance, a nothing, reveals to a woman the great, the divine artist who shall touch her heart and yet not blight 'it. The more Emmanuel was free to utter himself, the more charming were the expressions of his love.

“I have tried to get here before Pierquin,” he said to Marguerite one evening. “He is bringing some bad news; I would rather you heard it from me. Your father has sold all the timber in your forest at Waig-nies to speculators, who have resold it to dealers. The trees are already felled, and the logs are carried away. Monsieur Claës received three hundred thousand francs in cash as a first instalment of the price, which he has used towards paying his bills in Paris; but to clear off his debts entirely he has been forced to assign a hundred thousand francs of the three hundred thousand still due to him on the purchase-money.”

Pierquin entered at this moment.

“Ah! my dear cousin,” he said, “you are ruined. I told you how it would be; but you would not listen to me. Your father has an insatiable appetite. He has swallowed your woods at a mouthful. Your family guardian, Monsieur Conyncks, is just now absent in Amsterdam, and Claës has seized the opportunity to strike the blow. It is all wrong. I have written to

Monsieur Conyncks, but he will get here too late; everything will be squandered. You will be obliged to sue your father. The suit can't be long, but it will be dishonorable. Monsieur Conyncks has no alternative but to institute proceedings; the law requires it. This is the result of your obstinacy. Do you now see my prudence, and how devoted I was to your interests?"

"I bring you some good news, mademoiselle," said young de Solis in his gentle voice. "Gabriel has been admitted to the *École Polytechnique*. The difficulties that seemed in the way have all been removed."

Marguerite thanked him with a smile as she said: —

"My savings will now come in play! Martha, we must begin to-morrow on Gabriel's outfit. My poor Félicie, we shall have to work hard," she added, kissing her sister's forehead.

"To-morrow you shall have him at home, to remain ten days," said Emmanuel; "he must be in Paris by the fifteenth of November."

"My cousin Gabriel has done a sensible thing," said the lawyer, eyeing the professor from head to foot; "for he will have to make his own way. But, my dear cousin, the question now is how to save the honor of the family: will you listen to what I say this time?"

"No," she said, "not if it relates to marriage."

"Then what will you do?"

"I? — nothing."

“But you are of age.”

“I shall be in a few days. Have you any course to suggest to me,” she added, “which will reconcile our interests with the duty we owe to our father and to the honor of the family?”

“My dear cousin, nothing can be done till your uncle arrives. When he does, I will call again.”

“Adieu, monsieur,” said Marguerite.

“The poorer she is the more airs she gives herself,” thought the notary. “Adieu, mademoiselle,” he said aloud. “Monsieur, my respects to you;” and he went away, paying no attention to Félicie or Martha.

“I have been studying the Code for the last two days, and I have consulted an experienced old lawyer, a friend of my uncle,” said Emmanuel, in a hesitating voice. “If you will allow me, I will go to Amsterdam to-morrow and see Monsieur Conyncks. Listen, dear Marguerite —”

He uttered her name for the first time; she thanked him with a smile and a tearful glance, and made a gentle inclination of her head. He paused, looking at Félicie and Martha.

“Speak before my sister,” said Marguerite. “She is so docile and courageous that she does not need this discussion to make her resigned to our life of toil and privation; but it is best that she should see for herself how necessary courage is to us.”

The two sisters clasped hands and kissed each other, as if to renew some pledge of union before the coming disaster.

“Leave us, Martha.”

“Dear Marguerite,” said Emmanuel, letting the happiness he felt in conquering the lesser rights of affection sound in the inflections of his voice, “I have procured the names and addresses of the purchasers who still owe the remaining two hundred thousand francs on the felled timber. To-morrow, if you give consent, a lawyer acting in the name of Monsieur Conyncks, who will not disavow the act, will serve an injunction upon them. Six days hence, by which time your uncle will have returned, the family council can be called together, and Gabriel put in possession of his legal rights, for he is now eighteen. You and your brother being thus authorized to use those rights, you will demand your share in the proceeds of the timber. Monsieur Claës cannot refuse you the two hundred thousand francs on which the injunction will have been put; as to the remaining hundred thousand which is due to you, you must obtain a mortgage on this house. Monsieur Conyncks will demand securities for the three hundred thousand belonging to Félicie and Jean. Under these circumstances your father will be obliged to mortgage his property on the plain of Orchies, which he has already encumbered to the amount of

three hundred thousand francs. The law gives a retrospective priority to the claims of minors ; and that will save you. Monsieur Claës's hands will be tied for the future ; your property becomes inalienable, and he can no longer borrow on his own estates because they will be held as security for other sums. Moreover, the whole can be done quietly, without scandal or legal proceedings. Your father will be forced to greater prudence in making his researches, even if he cannot be persuaded to relinquish them altogether."

"Yes," said Marguerite, "but where, meantime, can we find the means of living? The hundred thousand francs for which, you say, I must obtain a mortgage on this house, would bring in nothing while we still live here. The proceeds of my father's property in the country will pay the interest on the three hundred thousand francs he owes to others ; but how are we to live?"

"In the first place," said Emmanuel, "by investing the fifty thousand francs which belong to Gabriel in the public Funds you will get, according to present rates, more than four thousand francs' income, which will suffice to pay your brother's board and lodging and all his other expenses in Paris. Gabriel cannot touch the capital until he is of age, therefore you need not fear that he will waste a penny of it, and you will have one expense the less. Besides, you will have your own fifty thousand."

“My father will ask me for them,” she said in a frightened tone; “and I shall not be able to refuse him.”

“Well, dear Marguerite, even so, you can evade that by robbing yourself. Place your money in the Grand-Livre in Gabriel’s name: it will bring you twelve or thirteen thousand francs a year. Minors who are emancipated cannot sell property without permission of the family council; you will thus gain three years’ peace of mind. By that time your father will either have solved his problem or renounced it; and Gabriel, then of age, will reinvest the money in your own name.”

Marguerite made him explain to her once more the legal points which she did not at first understand. It was certainly a novel sight to see this pair of lovers poring over the Code, which Emmanuel had brought with him to show his mistress the laws which protected the property of minors; she quickly caught the meaning of them, thanks to the natural penetration of women, which in this case love still further sharpened.

Gabriel came home to his father’s house on the following day. When Monsieur de Solis brought him up to Balthazar and told of his admission to the *École Polytechnique*, the father thanked the professor with a wave of his hand, and said: —

“I am very glad ; Gabriel may become a man of science.”

“Oh, my brother,” cried Marguerite, as Balthazar went back to his laboratory, “work hard, waste no money ; spend what is necessary, but practise economy. On the days when you are allowed to go out, pass your time with our friends and relations ; contract none of the habits which ruin young men in Paris. Your expenses will amount to nearly three thousand francs, and that will leave you a thousand francs for your pocket-money ; that is surely enough.”

“I will answer for him,” said Emmanuel de Solis, laying his hand on his pupil’s shoulder.

A month later, Monsieur Conyncks, in conjunction with Marguerite, had obtained all necessary securities from Claës. The plan so wisely proposed by Emmanuel de Solis was fully approved and executed. Face to face with the law, and in presence of his cousin, whose stern sense of honor allowed no compromise, Balthazar, ashamed of the sale of the timber to which he had consented at a moment when he was harassed by creditors, submitted to all that was demanded of him. Glad to repair the almost involuntary wrong that he had done to his children, he signed the deeds in a preoccupied way. He was now as careless and improvident as a negro who sells his wife in the morning for a drop of brandy, and cries for her at night. He gave no

thought to even the immediate future, and never asked himself what resources he would have when his last ducat was melted up. He pursued his work and continued his purchases, apparently unaware that he was now no more than the titular owner of his house and lands, and that he could not, thanks to the severity of the laws, raise another penny upon a property of which he was now, as it were, the legal guardian.

The year 1818 ended without bringing any new misfortune. The sisters paid the costs of Jean's education and met all the expenses of the household out of the thirteen thousand francs a year from the sum placed in the Grand-Livre in Gabriel's name, which he punctually remitted to them. Monsieur de Solis lost his uncle, the abbé, in December of that year.

Early in January Marguerite learned through Martha that her father had sold his collection of tulips, also the furniture of the front house, and all the family silver. She was obliged to buy back the spoons and forks that were necessary for the daily service of the table, and these she now ordered to be stamped with her initials. Until that day Marguerite had kept silence towards her father on the subject of his depredations, but that evening after dinner she requested Félicie to leave her alone with him, and when he seated himself as usual by the corner of the parlor fireplace, she said : —

“ My dear father, you are the master here, and can

sell everything, even your children. We are ready to obey you without a murmur; but I am forced to tell you that we are without money, that we have barely enough to live on, and that Félicie and I are obliged to work night and day to pay for the schooling of little Jean with the price of the lace dress we are now making. My dear father, I implore you to give up your researches."

"You are right, my dear child; in six weeks they will be finished; I shall have found the Absolute, or the Absolute will be proved undiscoverable. You will have millions —"

"Give us meanwhile the bread to eat," replied Marguerite.

"Bread? is there no bread here?" said Claës, with a frightened air. "No bread in the house of a Claës! What has become of our property?"

"You have cut down the forest of Waignies. The ground has not been cleared and is therefore unproductive. As for your farms at Orchies, the rents scarcely suffice to pay the interest of the sums you have borrowed —"

"Then what are we living on?" he demanded.

Marguerite held up her needle and continued: —

"Gabriel's income helps us, but it is insufficient; I can make both ends meet at the close of the year if you do not overwhelm me with bills that I do not expect,

for purchases you tell me nothing about. When I think I have enough to meet my quarterly expenses some unexpected bill for potash, or zinc, or sulphur, is brought to me."

"My dear child, have patience for six weeks; after that, I will be judicious. My little Marguerite, you shall see wonders."

"It is time you should think of your affairs. You have sold everything, — pictures, tulips, plate; nothing is left. At least, refrain from making debts."

"I don't wish to make any more!" he said.

"Any more?" she cried, "then you have some?"

"Mere trifles," he said, but he dropped his eyes and colored.

For the first time in her life Marguerite felt humiliated by the lowering of her father's character, and suffered from it so much that she dared not question him.

A month after this scene one of the Douai bankers brought a bill of exchange for ten thousand francs signed by Claës. Marguerite asked the banker to wait a day, and expressed her regret that she had not been notified to prepare for this payment; whereupon he informed her that the house of Protez and Chiffreville held nine other bills to the same amount, falling due in consecutive months.

"All is over!" cried Marguerite, "the time has come."

She sent for her father, and walked up and down the parlor with hasty steps, talking to herself: —

“A hundred thousand francs!” she cried. “I must find them, or see my father in prison. What am I to do?”

Balthazar did not come. Weary of waiting for him, Marguerite went up to the laboratory. As she entered she saw him in the middle of an immense, brilliantly-lighted room, filled with machinery and dusty glass vessels: here and there were books, and tables encumbered with specimens and products ticketed and numbered. On all sides the disorder of scientific pursuits contrasted strongly with Flemish habits. This litter of retorts and vaporizers, metals, fantastically colored crystals, specimens hooked upon the walls or lying on the furnaces, surrounded the central figure of Balthazar Claës, without a coat, his arms bare like those of a workman, his breast exposed, and showing the white hairs which covered it. His eyes were gazing with horrible fixity at a pneumatic trough. The receiver of this instrument was covered with a lens made of double convex glasses, the space between the glasses being filled with alcohol, which focussed the light coming through one of the compartments of the rose-window of the garret. The shelf of the receiver communicated with the wire of an immense galvanic battery. Lemulquinier, busy at the moment in moving the pedestal of

the machine, which was placed on a movable axle so as to keep the lens in a perpendicular direction to the rays of the sun, turned round, his face black with dust, and called out, —

“Ha ! mademoiselle, don’t come in.”

The aspect of her father, half-kneeling beside the instrument, and receiving the full strength of the sunlight upon his head, the protuberances of his skull, its scanty hairs resembling threads of silver, his face contracted by the agonies of expectation, the strangeness of the objects that surrounded him, the obscurity of parts of the vast garret from which fantastic engines seemed about to spring, all contributed to startle Marguerite, who said to herself, in terror, —

“He is mad !”

Then she went up to him and whispered in his ear, “Send away Lemulquinier.”

“No, no, my child ; I want him : I am in the midst of an experiment no one has yet thought of. For the last three days we have been watching for every ray of sun. I now have the means of submitting metals, in a complete vacuum, to concentrated solar fires and to electric currents. At this very moment the most powerful action a chemist can employ is about to show results which I alone —”

“My father, instead of vaporizing metals you should employ them in paying your notes of hand —”

“Wait, wait!”

“Monsieur Mersktus has been here, father; and he must have ten thousand francs by four o'clock.”

“Yes, yes, presently. True, I did sign a little note which is payable this month. I felt sure I should have found the Absolute. Good God! If I could only have a July sun the experiment would be successful.”

He grasped his head and sat down on an old cane chair; a few tears rolled from his eyes.

“Monsieur is quite right,” said Lemulquinier; “it is all the fault of that rascally sun which is too feeble, — the coward, the lazy thing!”

Master and valet paid no further attention to Marguerite.

“Leave us, Mulquinier,” she said.

“Ah! I see a new experiment!” cried Claës.

“Father, lay aside your experiments,” said his daughter, when they were alone. “You have one hundred thousand francs to pay, and we have not a penny. Leave your laboratory; your honor is in question. What will become of you if you are put in prison? Will you soil your white hairs and the name of Claës with the disgrace of bankruptcy? I will not allow it. I shall have strength to oppose your madness; it would be dreadful to see you without bread in your old age. Open your eyes to our position; see reason at last!”

“Madness!” cried Balthazar, struggling to his feet. He fixed his luminous eyes upon his daughter, crossed his arms on his breast, and repeated the word “Madness!” so majestically that Marguerite trembled.

“Ah!” he cried, “your mother would never have uttered that word to me. She was not ignorant of the importance of my researches; she learned a science to understand me; she recognized that I toiled for the human race; she knew there was nothing sordid or selfish in my aims. The feelings of a loving wife are higher, I see it now, than filial affection. Yes, Love is above all other feelings. See reason!” he went on, striking his breast. “Do I lack reason? Am I not myself? You say we are poor; well, my daughter, I choose it to be so. I am your father, obey me. I will make you rich when I please. Your fortune? it is a pittance! When I find the solvent of carbon I will fill your parlor with diamonds, and they are but a scintilla of what I seek. You can well afford to wait while I consume my life in superhuman efforts.”

“Father, I have no right to ask an account of the four millions you have already engulfed in this fatal garret. I will not speak to you of my mother whom you killed. If I had a husband, I should love him, doubtless, as she loved you; I should be ready to sacrifice all to him, as she sacrificed all for you. I have obeyed her orders in giving myself wholly to you; I

have proved it in not marrying and compelling you to render an account of your guardianship. Let us dismiss the past and think of the present. I am here now to represent the necessity which you have created for yourself. You must have money to meet your notes — do you understand me? There is nothing left to seize here but the portrait of your ancestor, the Claës martyr. I come in the name of my mother, who felt herself too feeble to defend her children against their father; she ordered me to resist you. I come in the name of my brothers and my sister: I come, father, in the name of all the Claës, and I command you to give up your experiments, or earn the means of pursuing them hereafter, if pursue them you must. If you arm yourself with the power of your paternity, which you employ only for our destruction, I have on my side your ancestors and your honor, whose voice is louder than that of chemistry. The Family is greater than Science. I have been too long your daughter.”

“And you choose to be my executioner,” he said, in a feeble voice.

Marguerite turned and fled away, that she might not abdicate the part she had just assumed: she fancied she heard again her mother’s voice saying to her, “Do not oppose your father too much; love him well.”

XII.

“**MADemoiselle** has made a pretty piece of work up yonder,” said Lemulquinier, coming down to the kitchen for his breakfast. “We were just going to put our hands on the great secret, we only wanted a scrap of July sun, for monsieur, — ah, what a man! he’s almost in the shoes of the good God himself! — was almost within *that*,” he said to Josette, clicking his thumbnail against a front tooth, “of getting hold of the Absolute, when up she came, slam bang, screaming some nonsense about notes of hand.”

“Well, pay them yourself,” said Martha, “out of your wages.”

“Where’s the butter for my bread?” said Lemulquinier to the cook.

“Where’s the money to buy it?” she answered, sharply. “Come, old villain, if you make gold in that devil’s kitchen of yours, why don’t you make butter? ’T would n’t be half so difficult, and you could sell it in the market for enough to make the pot boil. We all eat dry bread. The young ladies are satisfied with dry bread and nuts, and do you expect to be better fed than your masters? Mademoiselle won’t spend more

than one hundred francs a month for the whole household. There's only one dinner for all. If you want dainties you've got your furnaces upstairs where you fricassee pearls till there's nothing else talked of in town. Get your roast chickens up there."

Lemulquinier took his dry bread and went out.

"He will go and buy something to eat with his own money," said Martha; "all the better, — it is just so much saved. Is n't he stingy, the old scarecrow!"

"Starve him! that's the only way to manage him," said Josette. "For a week past he has n't rubbed a single floor; I have to do his work, for he is always upstairs. He can very well afford to pay me for it with the present of a few herrings; if he brings any home, I shall lay hands on them, I can tell him that."

"Ah!" exclaimed Martha, "I hear Mademoiselle Marguerite crying. Her wizard of a father would swallow the house at a gulp without asking a Christian blessing, the old sorcerer! In my country he'd be burned alive; but people here have no more religion than the Moors in Africa."

Marguerite could scarcely stifle her sobs as she came through the gallery. She reached her room, took out her mother's letter, and read as follows: —

MY CHILD, — If God so wills, my spirit will be within your heart when you read these words, the last I shall ever write; they are full of love for my dear ones, left at the mercy of a

demon whom I have not been able to resist. When you read these words he will have taken your last crust, just as he took my life and squandered my love. You know, my darling, if I loved your father: I die loving him less, for I take precautions against him which I never could have practised while living. Yes, in the depths of my coffin I shall have kept a last resource for the day when some terrible misfortune overtakes you. If when that day comes you are reduced to poverty, or if your honor is in question, my child, send for Monsieur de Solis, should he be living, — if not, for his nephew, our good Emmanuel; they hold one hundred and seventy thousand francs which are yours and will enable you to live.

If nothing shall have subdued his passion; if his children prove no stronger barrier than my happiness has been, and cannot stop his criminal career, — leave him, leave your father, that you may live. I could not forsake him; I was bound to him. You, Marguerite, you must save the family. I absolve you for all you may do to defend Gabriel and Jean and Félicie. Take courage; be the guardian angel of the Claës. Be firm, — I dare not say be pitiless; but to repair the evil already done you must keep some means at hand. On the day when you read this letter, regard yourself as ruined already, for nothing will stay the fury of that passion which has torn all things from me.

My child, remember this: the truest love is to forget your heart. Even though you be forced to deceive your father, your dissimulation will be blessed; your actions, however blamable they may seem, will be heroic if taken to protect the family. The virtuous Monsieur de Solis tells me so; and no conscience was ever purer or more enlightened than his. I could never have had the courage to speak these words to you, even with my dying breath.

And yet, my daughter, be respectful, be kind in the dreadful struggle. Resist him, but love him; deny him gently. My hidden tears, my inward griefs will be known only when I am dead. Kiss my dear children in my name when the hour comes and you are called upon to protect them.

May God and the saints be with you!

JOSÉPHINE.

To this letter was added an acknowledgment from the Messieurs de Solis, uncle and nephew, who thereby bound themselves to place the money intrusted to them by Madame Claës in the hands of whoever of her children should present the paper.

“Martha,” cried Marguerite to the duenna, who came quickly; “go to Monsieur Emmanuel de Solis, and ask him to come to me. — Noble, discreet heart! he never told me,” she thought; “though all my griefs and cares are his, he never told me!”

Emmanuel came before Martha could get back.

“You have kept a secret from me,” she said, showing him her mother’s letter.

Emmanuel bent his head.

“Marguerite, are you in great trouble?” he asked.

“Yes,” she answered; “be my support, — you, whom my mother calls ‘our good Emmanuel.’” She showed him the letter, unable to repress her joy in knowing that her mother approved her choice.

“My blood and my life were yours on the morrow of the day when I first saw you in the gallery,” he said;

“but I scarcely dared to hope the time might come when you would accept them. If you know me well, you know my word is sacred. Forgive the absolute obedience I have paid to your mother’s wishes ; it was not for me to judge her intentions.”

“You have saved us,” she said, interrupting him, and taking his arm to go down to the parlor.

After hearing from Emmanuel the origin of the money intrusted to him, Marguerite confided to him the terrible straits in which the family now found themselves.

“I must pay those notes at once,” said Emmanuel. “If Mersktus holds them all, you can at least save the interest. I will bring you the remaining seventy thousand francs. My poor uncle left me quite a large sum in ducats, which are easy to carry secretly.”

“Oh !” she said, “bring them at night ; we can hide them when my father is asleep. If he knew that I had money, he might try to force it from me. Oh, Emmanuel, think what it is to distrust a father !” she said, weeping and resting her forehead against the young man’s heart.

This sad, confiding movement, with which the young girl asked protection, was the first expression of a love hitherto wrapped in melancholy and restrained within a sphere of grief: the heart, too full, was forced to overflow beneath the pressure of this new misery.

“What can we do; what will become of us? He sees nothing, he cares for nothing, — neither for us nor for himself. I know not how he can live in that garret, where the air is stifling.”

“What can you expect of a man who calls incessantly, like Richard III., ‘My kingdom for a horse’?” said Emmanuel. “He is pitiless; and in that you must imitate him. Pay his notes; give him, if you will, your whole fortune; but that of your sister and of your brothers is neither yours nor his.”

“Give him my fortune?” she said, pressing her lover’s hand and looking at him with ardor in her eyes; “you advise it, you! — and Pierquin told a hundred lies to make me keep it!”

“Alas! I may be selfish in my own way,” he said. “Sometimes I long for you without fortune; you seem nearer to me then! At other times I want you rich and happy, and I feel how paltry it is to think that the poor grandeurs of wealth can separate us.”

“Dear, let us not speak of ourselves.”

“Ourselves!” he repeated, with rapture. Then, after a pause, he added: “The evil is great, but it is not irreparable.”

“It can be repaired only by us: the Claës family has now no head. To reach the stage of being neither father nor man, to have no consciousness of justice or injustice (for, in defiance of the laws, he has dissipated —

he, so great, so noble, so upright — the property of the children he was bound to defend), oh, to what depths must he have fallen! My God! what is this thing he seeks?”

“Unfortunately, dear Marguerite, wrong as he is in his relation to his family, he is right scientifically. A score of men in Europe admire him for the very thing which others count as madness. But nevertheless you must, without scruple, refuse to let him take the property of his children. Great discoveries have always been accidental. If your father ever finds the solution of the problem, it will be when it costs him nothing; in a moment, perhaps, when he despairs of it.”

“My poor mother is happy,” said Marguerite; “she would have suffered a thousand deaths before she died: as it was, her first encounter with Science killed her. Alas! the strife is endless.”

“There is an end,” said Emmanuel. “When you have nothing left, Monsieur Claës can get no further credit; then he will stop.”

“Let him stop now, then,” cried Marguerite, “for we are without a penny!”

Monsieur de Solis went to buy up Claës’s notes and returned, bringing them to Marguerite. Balthazar, contrary to his custom, came down a few moments before dinner. For the first time in two years his daughter noticed the signs of a human grief upon his face: he

was again a father, reason and judgment had overcome Science; he looked into the court-yard, then into the garden, and when certain that he was alone with his daughter, he came up to her with a look of melancholy kindness.

“My child,” he said, taking her hand and pressing it with persuasive tenderness, “forgive your old father. Yes, Marguerite, I have done wrong. You spoke truly. So long as I have not *found* I am a miserable wretch. I will go away from here. I cannot see Van Claës sold,” he went on, pointing to the martyr’s portrait. “He died for Liberty, I die for Science; he is venerated, I am hated.”

“Hated? oh, my father, no,” she cried, throwing herself on his breast; “we all adore you. Do we not, Félicie?” she said, turning to her sister who came in at the moment.

“What is the matter, dear father?” said his youngest daughter, taking his hand.

“I have ruined you.”

“Ah!” cried Félicie, “but our brothers will make our fortune. Jean is always at the head of his class.”

“See, father,” said Marguerite, leading Balthazar in a coaxing, filial way to the chimney-piece and taking some papers from beneath the clock, “here are your notes of hand; but do not sign any more, there is nothing left to pay them with —”

“Then you have money?” whispered Balthazar in her ear, when he recovered from his surprise.

His words and manner tortured the heroic girl; she saw the delirium of joy and hope in her father’s face as he looked about him to discover the gold.

“Father,” she said, “I have my own fortune.”

“Give it to me,” he said with a rapacious gesture; “I will return you a hundred-fold.”

“Yes, I will give it to you,” answered Marguerite, looking gravely at Balthazar, who did not know the meaning she put into her words.

“Ah, my dear daughter!” he cried, “you save my life. I have thought of a last experiment, after which nothing more is possible. If, this time, I do not find the Absolute, I must renounce the search. Come to my arms, my darling child; I will make you the happiest woman upon earth. You give me glory; you bring me back to happiness; you bestow the power to heap treasures upon my children — yes! I will load you with jewels, with wealth.”

He kissed his daughter’s forehead, took her hands and pressed them, and testified his joy by fondling caresses which to Marguerite seemed almost obsequious. During the dinner he thought only of her; he looked at her eagerly with the assiduous devotion displayed by a lover to his mistress: if she made a movement, he tried to divine her wish, and rose to fulfil it; he

made her ashamed by the youthful eagerness of his attentions, which were painfully out of keeping with his premature old age. To all these cajoleries, Marguerite herself presented the contrast of actual distress, shown sometimes by a word of doubt, sometimes by a glance along the empty shelves of the sideboards in the dining-room.

“ Well, well,” he said, following her eye, “ in six months we shall fill them again with gold, and marvellous things. You shall be like a queen. Bah ! nature herself will belong to us, we shall rise above all created beings — through you, you, my Marguerite ! Margarita,” he said, smiling, “ thy name is a prophecy. ‘ Margarita ’ means a pearl. Sterne says so somewhere. Did you ever read Sterne ? Would you like to have a Sterne ? it would amuse you.”

“ A pearl, they say, is the result of a disease,” she answered ; “ we have suffered enough already.”

“ Do not be sad ; you will make the happiness of those you love ; you shall be rich and all-powerful.”

“ Mademoiselle has got such a good heart,” said Lemulquinier, whose seamed face stretched itself painfully into a smile.

For the rest of the evening Balthazar displayed to his daughters all the natural graces of his character and the charms of his conversation. Seductive as the serpent, his lips, his eyes, poured out a magnetic fluid ; he

put forth that power of genius, that gentleness of spirit which once fascinated Joséphine and now drew, as it were, his daughters into his heart. When Emmanuel de Solis came he found, for the first time in many months, the father and the children reunited. The young professor, in spite of his reserve, came under the influence of the scene ; for Claës's manners and conversation had recovered their former irresistible seduction !

Men of science, plunged though they be in abysses of thought and ceaselessly employed in studying the moral world, take notice, nevertheless, of the smallest details of the sphere in which they live. More out of date with their surroundings than really absent-minded, they are never in harmony with the life about them ; they know and forget all ; they prejudge the future in their own minds, prophesy to their own souls, know of an event before it happens, and yet they say nothing of all this. If, in the hush of meditation, they sometimes use their power to observe and recognize that which goes on around them, they are satisfied with having divined its meaning ; their occupations hurry them on, and they frequently make false application of the knowledge they have acquired about the things of life. Sometimes they wake from their social apathy, or they drop from the world of thought to the world of life ; at such times they come with well-stored memories, and are by no means strangers to what is happening.

Balthazar, who joined the perspicacity of the heart to that of the brain, knew his daughter's whole past; he knew, or he had guessed, the history of the hidden love that united her with Emmanuel: he now showed this delicately, and sanctioned their affection by taking part in it. It was the sweetest flattery a father could bestow, and the lovers were unable to resist it. The evening passed delightfully, — contrasting with the griefs which threatened the lives of these poor children. When Balthazar retired, after, as we may say, filling his family with light and bathing them with tenderness, Emmanuel de Solis, who had shown some embarrassment of manner, took from his pockets three thousand ducats in gold, the possession of which he had feared to betray. He placed them on the work-table, where Marguerite covered them with some linen she was mending; and then he went to his own house to fetch the rest of the money. When he returned, Félicie had gone to bed. Eleven o'clock struck; Martha, who sat up to undress her mistress, was still with Félicie.

“Where can we hide it?” said Marguerite, unable to resist the pleasure of playing with the gold ducats, — a childish amusement which proved disastrous.

“I will lift this marble pedestal, which is hollow,” said Emmanuel; “you can slip in the packages, and the devil himself will not think of looking for them there.”

Just as Marguerite was making her last trip but one from the work-table to the pedestal, carrying the gold, she suddenly gave a piercing cry, and let fall the packages, the covers of which broke as they fell, and the coins were scattered about the room. Her father stood at the parlor door; the avidity of his eyes terrified her.

“What are you doing?” he said, looking first at his daughter, whose terror nailed her to the floor, and then at the young man, who had hastily sprung up, — though his attitude beside the pedestal was sufficiently significant. The rattle of the gold upon the ground was horrible, the scattering of it prophetic.

“I could not be mistaken,” said Balthazar, sitting down; “I heard the sound of gold.”

He was not less agitated than the young people, whose hearts were beating so in unison that their throbs might be heard, like the ticking of a clock, amid the profound silence which suddenly settled on the parlor.

“Thank you, Monsieur de Solis,” said Marguerite, giving Emmanuel a glance which meant, “Come to my rescue and help me to save this money.”

“What gold is this?” resumed Balthazar, casting at Marguerite and Emmanuel a glance of terrible clear-sightedness.

“This gold belongs to Monsieur de Solis, who is kind enough to lend it to me that I may pay our debts honorably,” she answered.

Emmanuel colored and turned as though about to leave the room : Balthazar caught him by the arm.

“ Monsieur,” he said, “ you must not escape my thanks.”

“ Monsieur, you owe me none. This money belongs to Mademoiselle Marguerite, who borrows it from me on the security of her own property,” Emmanuel replied, looking at his mistress, who thanked him with an almost imperceptible movement of her eyelids.

“ I shall not allow that,” said Claës, taking a pen and a sheet of paper from the table where Félicie did her writing, and turning to the astonished young people. “ How much is it?” His eager passion made him more astute than the wildest of rascally bailiffs : the sum was to be his. Marguerite and Monsieur de Solis hesitated.

“ Let us count it,” he said.

“ There are six thousand ducats,” said Emmanuel.

“ Seventy thousand francs,” remarked Claës.

The glance which Marguerite threw at her lover gave him courage.

“ Monsieur,” he said, “ your note bears no value ; pardon this purely technical term. I have to-day lent Mademoiselle Claës one hundred thousand francs to redeem your notes of hand which you had no means of paying : you are therefore unable to give me any security. These one hundred and seventy thousand francs

belong to Mademoiselle Claës, who can dispose of them as she sees fit; but I have lent them on a pledge that she will sign a deed securing them to me on her share of the now denuded land of the forest of Waignies."

Marguerite turned away her head that her lover might not see the tears that gathered in her eyes. She knew Emmanuel's purity of soul. Brought up by his uncle to the practice of the sternest religious virtues, the young man had an especial horror of falsehood: after giving his heart and life to Marguerite Claës he now made her the sacrifice of his conscience.

"Adieu, monsieur," said Balthazar, "I thought you had more confidence in a man who looked upon you with the eyes of a father."

After exchanging a despairing look with Marguerite, Emmanuel was shown out by Martha, who closed and fastened the street-door.

The moment the father and daughter were alone Claës said, —

"You love me, do you not?"

"Come to the point, father. You want this money: you cannot have it."

She began to pick up the coins; her father silently helped her to gather them together and count the sum she had dropped; Marguerite allowed him to do so without manifesting the least distrust. When two thousand

ducats were piled on the table, Balthazar said, with a desperate air, —

“Marguerite, I must have that money.”

“If you take it, it will be robbery,” she replied coldly. “Hear me, father: better kill us at one blow than make us suffer a hundred deaths a day. Let it now be seen which of us must yield.”

“Do you mean to kill your father?”

“We avenge our mother,” she said, pointing to the spot where Madame Claës died.

“My daughter, if you knew the truth of this matter, you would not use those words to me. Listen, and I will endeavor to explain the great problem — but no, you cannot comprehend me,” he cried in accents of despair. “Come, give me the money; believe for once in your father. Yes, I know I caused your mother pain: I have dissipated — to use the word of fools — my own fortune and injured yours; I know my children are sacrificed for a thing you call madness; but my angel, my darling, my love, my Marguerite, hear me! If I do not now succeed, I will give myself up to you; I will obey you as you are bound to obey me; I will do your will; you shall take charge of all my property; I will no longer be the guardian of my children; I pledge myself to lay down my authority. I swear by your mother’s memory!” he cried, shedding tears.

Marguerite turned away her head, unable to bear the sight. Claës, thinking she meant to yield, flung himself on his knees beside her.

“Marguerite, Marguerite! give it to me — give it!” he cried. “What are sixty thousand francs against eternal remorse? See, I shall die, this will kill me. Listen, my word is sacred. If I fail now I will abandon my labors; I will leave Flanders, — France even, if you demand it; I will go away and toil like a day-laborer to recover, sou by sou, the fortunes I have lost, and restore to my children all that Science has taken from them.”

Marguerite tried to raise her father, but he persisted in remaining on his knees, and continued, still weeping: —

“Be tender and obedient for this last time! If I do not succeed, I will myself declare your hardness just. You shall call me a fool; you shall say I am a bad father; you may even tell me that I am ignorant and incapable. And when I hear you say those words I will kiss your hands. You may beat me, if you will, and when you strike I will bless you as the best of daughters, remembering that you have given me your blood.”

“If it were my blood, my life’s blood, I would give it to you,” she cried; “but can I let Science cut the throats of my brothers and my sister? No. Cease,

cease!" she said, wiping her tears and pushing aside her father's caressing hands.

"Sixty thousand francs and two months," he said, rising in anger; "that is all I want: but my daughter stands between me and fame and wealth. I curse you!" he went on; "you are no daughter of mine, you are not a woman, you have no heart, you will never be a mother or a wife! — Give it to me, let me take it, my little one, my precious child, I will love you forever," — and he stretched his hand with a movement of hideous energy towards the gold.

"I am helpless against physical force; but God and the great Claës see us now," she said, pointing to the picture.

"Try to live, if you can, with your father's blood upon you," cried Balthazar, looking at her with abhorrence. He rose, glanced round the room and slowly left it. When he reached the door he turned as a beggar might have done and implored his daughter with a gesture, to which she replied by a negative motion of her head.

"Farewell, my daughter," he said, gently, "may you live happy!"

When he had disappeared, Marguerite remained in a trance which separated her from earth; she was no longer in the parlor; she lost consciousness of physical existence; she had wings, and soared amid the

immensities of the moral world, where Thought contracts the limits both of Time and Space, where a divine hand lifts the veil of the Future. It seemed to her that days elapsed between each footfall of her father as he went up the stairs; then a shudder of dread went over her as she heard him enter his chamber. Guided by a presentiment which flashed into her soul with the piercing keenness of lightning, she ran up the stairway, without light, without noise, with the velocity of an arrow, and saw her father with a pistol at his head.

“Take all!” she cried, springing towards him.

She fell into a chair. Balthazar, seeing her pallor, began to weep as old men weep; he became like a child, he kissed her brow, he spoke in disconnected words, he almost danced with joy, and tried to play with her as a lover with a mistress who has made him happy.

“Enough, father, enough,” she said; “remember your promise. If you do not succeed now, you pledge yourself to obey me?”

“Yes.”

“Oh, mother!” she cried turning towards Madame Claës’s chamber, “*you* would have given him all — would you not?”

“Sleep in peace,” said Balthazar, “you are a good daughter.”

“Sleep!” she said, “the nights of my youth are gone; you have made me old, father, just as you slowly withered my mother’s heart.”

“Poor child, would I could re-assure you by explaining the effects of the glorious experiment I have now imagined! you would then comprehend the truth.”

“I comprehend our ruin,” she said, leaving him.

The next morning, being a holiday, Emmanuel de Solis brought Jean to spend the day.

“Well?” he said, approaching Marguerite anxiously.

“I yielded,” she replied.

“My dear life,” he said, with a gesture of melancholy joy, “if you had withstood him I should greatly have admired you; but weak and feeble, I adore you!”

“Poor, poor Emmanuel; what is left for us?”

“Leave the future to me,” cried the young man, with a radiant look; “we love each other, and all is well.”

XIII.

SEVERAL months went by in perfect tranquillity. Monsieur de Solis made Marguerite see that her petty economies would never produce a fortune, and he advised her to live more at ease, by taking all that remained of the sum which Madame Claës had intrusted to him for the comfort and well-being of the household.

During these months Marguerite fell a prey to the anxieties which beset her mother under like circumstances. However incredulous she might be, she had come to hope in her father's genius. By an inexplicable phenomenon, many people have hope where they have no faith. Hope is the flower of Desire, faith is the fruit of Certainty. Marguerite said to herself, "If my father succeeds, we shall be happy." Claës and Lemulquinier alone said: "We shall succeed." Unhappily, from day to day the Searcher's face grew sadder. Sometimes, when he came to dinner he dared not look at his daughter; at other times he glanced at her in triumph. Marguerite employed her evenings in making young de Solis explain to her many legal points and difficulties. At last her masculine education was completed; she

was evidently preparing herself to execute the plan she had resolved upon if her father were again vanquished in his duel with the Unknown (X).

About the beginning of July, Balthazar spent a whole day sitting on a bench in the garden, plunged in gloomy meditation. He gazed at the mound now bare of tulips, at the windows of his wife's chamber; he shuddered, no doubt, as he thought of all that his search had cost him: his movements betrayed that his thoughts were busy outside of Science. Marguerite brought her sewing and sat beside him for a while before dinner.

“You have not succeeded, father?”

“No, my child.”

“Ah!” said Marguerite, in a gentle voice. “I will not say one word of reproach; we are both equally guilty. I only claim the fulfilment of your promise; it is surely sacred to you — you are a Claës. Your children will surround you with love and filial respect; but you now belong to me; you owe me obedience. Do not be uneasy; my reign will be gentle, and I will endeavor to bring it quickly to an end. Father, I am going to leave you for a month; I shall be busy with your affairs; for,” she said, kissing him on his brow, “you are now my child. I take Martha with me; tomorrow Félicie will manage the household. The poor child is only seventeen, and she will not know how to resist you; therefore be generous, do not ask her for

money ; she has only enough for the barest necessities of the household. Take courage : renounce your labors and your thoughts for three or four years. The great problem may ripen towards discovery ; by that time I shall have gathered the money that is necessary to solve it, — and you will solve it. Tell me, father, your queen is clement, is she not ?”

“ Then all is not lost ? ” said the old man.

“ No, not if you keep your word.”

“ I will obey you, my daughter,” answered Claës, with deep emotion.

The next day, Monsieur Conyncks of Cambrai came to fetch his great-niece. He was in a travelling-carriage, and would only remain long enough for Marguerite and Martha to make their last arrangements. Monsieur Claës received his cousin with courtesy, but he was evidently sad and humiliated. Old Conyncks guessed his thoughts, and said with blunt frankness while they were breakfasting : —

“ I have some of your pictures, cousin ; I have a taste for pictures, — a ruinous passion, but we all have our manias.”

“ Dear uncle ! ” exclaimed Marguerite.

“ The world declares that you are ruined, cousin ; but the treasure of a Claës is there,” said Conyncks, tapping his forehead, “ and here,” striking his heart ; “ don’t you think so ? I count upon you : and for that reason,

having a few spare ducats in my wallet, I put them to use in your service."

"Ah!" cried Balthazar, "I will repay you with treasures —"

"The only treasures we possess in Flanders are patience and labor," replied Conyncks, sternly. "Our ancestor has those words engraved upon his brow," he said, pointing to the portrait of Van Claës.

Marguerite kissed her father and bade him good-by, gave her last directions to Josette and to Félicie, and started with Monsieur Conyncks for Paris. The great-uncle was a widower with one child, a daughter twelve years old, and he was possessed of an immense fortune. It was not impossible that he would take a wife; consequently, the good people of Douai believed that Mademoiselle Claës would marry her great-uncle. The rumor of this marriage reached Pierquin, and brought him back in hot haste to the House of Claës.

Great changes had taken place in the ideas of that clever speculator. For the last two years society in Douai had been divided into hostile camps. The nobility formed one circle, the bourgeoisie another; the latter naturally inimical to the former. This sudden separation took place, as a matter of fact, all over France, and divided the country into two warring nations, whose jealous squabbles, always augmenting, were among the chief reasons why the revolution of July,

1830, was accepted in the provinces. Between these social camps, the one ultra-monarchical, the other ultra-liberal, were a number of functionaries of various kinds, admitted, according to their importance, to one or the other of these circles, and who, at the moment of the fall of the legitimate power, were neutral. At the beginning of the struggle between the nobility and the bourgeoisie, the royalist "cafés" displayed an unheard-of splendor, and eclipsed the liberal "cafés" so brilliantly that these gastronomic fêtes were said to have cost the lives of some of their frequenters who, like ill-cast cannon, were unable to withstand such practice. The two societies naturally became exclusive.

Pierquin, though rich for a provincial lawyer, was excluded from aristocratic circles and driven back upon the bourgeoisie. His self-love must have suffered from the successive rebuffs which he received when he felt himself insensibly set aside by people with whom he had rubbed shoulders up to the time of this social change. He had now reached his fortieth year, the last epoch at which a man who intends to marry can think of a young wife. The matches to which he was able to aspire were all among the bourgeoisie, but ambition prompted him to enter the upper circle by means of some creditable alliance.

The isolation in which the Claës family were now living had hitherto kept them aloof from these social

changes. Though Claës belonged to the old aristocracy of the province, his preoccupation of mind prevented him from sharing the class antipathies thus created. However poor a daughter of the Claës might be, she would bring to a husband the dower of social vanity so eagerly desired by all parvenus. Pierquin therefore returned to his allegiance, with the secret intention of making the necessary sacrifices to conclude a marriage which should realize all his ambitions. He kept company with Balthazar and Félicie during Marguerite's absence ; but in so doing he discovered, rather late in the day, a formidable competitor in Emmanuel de Solis. The property of the deceased abbé was thought to be considerable, and to the eyes of a man who calculated all the affairs of life in figures, the young heir seemed more powerful through his money than through the seductions of the heart—as to which Pierquin never made himself uneasy. In his mind the abbé's fortune restored the de Solis name to all its pristine value. Gold and nobility of birth were two orbs which reflected lustre on one another and doubled the illumination.

The sincere affection which the young professor testified for Félicie, whom he treated as a sister, excited Pierquin's spirit of emulation. He tried to eclipse Emmanuel by mingling a fashionable jargon and sundry expressions of superficial gallantry with anxious elegies and business airs which sat more naturally on his coun-

tenance. When he declared himself disenchanted with the world he looked at Félicie, as if to let her know that she alone could reconcile him with life. Félicie, who received for the first time in her life the compliments of a man, listened to this language, always sweet however deceptive ; she took emptiness for depth, and needing an object on which to fix the vague emotions of her heart, she allowed the lawyer to occupy her mind. Envious perhaps, though quite unconsciously, of the loving attentions with which Emmanuel surrounded her sister, she doubtless wished to be, like Marguerite, the object of the thoughts and cares of a man.

Pierquin readily perceived the preference which Félicie accorded him over Emmanuel, and to him it was a reason why he should persist in his attentions ; so that in the end he went further than he at first intended. Emmanuel watched the beginning of this passion, false perhaps in the lawyer, artless in Félicie, whose future was at stake. Soon, little colloquies followed, a few words said in a low voice behind Emmanuel's back, trifling deceptions which give to a look or a word a meaning whose insidious sweetness may be the cause of innocent mistakes. Relying on his intimacy with Félicie, Pierquin tried to discover the secret of Marguerite's journey, and to know if it were really a question of her marriage, and whether he must renounce all hope ; but, notwithstanding his clumsy cleverness in questioning

them, neither Balthazar nor Félicie could give him any light, for the good reason that they were in the dark themselves: Marguerite in taking the reins of power seemed to have followed its maxims and kept silence as to her projects.

The gloomy sadness of Balthazar and his great depression made it difficult to get through the evenings. Though Emmanuel succeeded in making him play backgammon, the chemist's mind was never present; during most of the time this man, so great in intellect, seemed simply stupid. Shorn of his expectations, ashamed of having squandered three fortunes, a gambler without money, he bent beneath the weight of ruin, beneath the burden of hopes that were betrayed rather than annihilated. This man of genius, gagged by dire necessity and upbraiding himself, was a tragic spectacle, fit to touch the hearts of the most unfeeling of men. Even Pierquin could not enter without respect the presence of that caged lion, whose eyes, full of baffled power, now calmed by sadness and faded from excess of light, seemed to proffer a prayer for charity which the mouth dared not utter. Sometimes a lightning flash crossed that withered face, whose fires revived at the conception of a new experiment; then, as he looked about the parlor, Balthazar's eyes would fasten on the spot where his wife had died, a film of tears rolled like hot grains of sand across the arid pupils of his eyes, which thought had

made immense, and his head fell forward on his breast. Like a Titan he had lifted the world, and the world fell on his breast and crushed him.

This gigantic grief, so manfully controlled, affected Pierquin and Emmanuel powerfully, and each felt moved at times to offer this man the necessary money to renew his search,—so contagious are the convictions of genius ! Both understood how it was that Madame Claës and Marguerite had flung their all into the gulf ; but reason promptly checked this impulse of their hearts, and their emotion was spent in efforts at consolation which still further embittered the anguish of the doomed Titan.

Claës never spoke of his eldest daughter, and showed no interest in her departure nor any anxiety as to her silence in not writing either to him or to Félicie. When de Solis or Pierquin asked for news of her he seemed annoyed. Did he suspect that Marguerite was working against him ? Was he humiliated at having resigned the majestic rights of paternity to his own child ? Had he come to love her less because she was now the father, he the child ? Perhaps there were many of these reasons, many of these inexpressible feelings which float like vapors through the soul, in the mute disgrace which he laid upon Marguerite. However great may be the great men of the earth, be they known or unknown, fortunate or unfortunate in their endeavors, all have littlenesses which belong to human nature. By a

double misfortune they suffer through their greatness not less than through their defects ; and perhaps Balthazar needed to grow accustomed to the pangs of wounded vanity. The life he was leading, the evenings when these four persons met together in Marguerite's absence, were full of sadness and vague, uneasy apprehensions. The days were barren like a parched-up soil ; where, nevertheless a few flowers grew, a few rare consolations, though without Marguerite, the soul, the hope, the strength of the family, the atmosphere seemed misty.

Two months went by in this way, during which Balthazar awaited the return of his daughter. Marguerite was brought back to Douai by her uncle who remained at the house instead of returning to Cambrai, no doubt to lend the weight of his authority to some *coup d'état* planned by his niece. Marguerite's return was made a family fête. Pierquin and Monsieur de Solis were invited to dinner by Félicie and Balthazar. When the travelling-carriage stopped before the house, the four went to meet it with demonstrations of joy. Marguerite seemed happy to see her home once more, and her eyes filled with tears as she crossed the court-yard to reach the parlor. When embracing her father she colored like a guilty wife who is unable to dissimulate ; but her face recovered its serenity as she looked at Emmanuel, from whom she seemed to gather strength to complete a work she had secretly undertaken.

Notwithstanding the gayety which animated all present during the dinner, father and daughter watched each other with distrust and curiosity. Balthazar asked his daughter no questions as to her stay in Paris, doubtless to preserve his parental dignity. Emmanuel de Solis imitated his reserve; but Pierquin, accustomed to be told all family secrets, said to Marguerite, concealing his curiosity under a show of liveliness: —

“ Well, my dear cousin, you have seen Paris and the theatres — ”

“ I have seen little of Paris,” she said; “ I did not go there for amusement. The days went by sadly, I was so impatient to see Douai once more.”

“ Yes, if I had not been angry about it she would not have gone to the Opera; and even there she was uneasy,” said Monsieur Conyncks.

It was a painful evening; every one was embarrassed and smiled vaguely with the artificial gayety which hides such real anxieties. Marguerite and Balthazar were a prey to cruel, latent fears which reacted on the rest. As the hours passed, the bearing of the father and daughter grew more and more constrained. Sometimes Marguerite tried to smile, but her motions, her looks, the tones of her voice betrayed a keen anxiety. Messieurs Conyncks and de Solis seemed to know the meaning of the secret feelings which agitated the noble girl, and they appeared to encourage her by expressive glances.

Balthazar, hurt at being kept from a knowledge of the steps that had been taken on his behalf, withdrew little by little from his children and friends, and pointedly kept silence. Marguerite would no doubt soon disclose what she had decided upon for his future.

To a great man, to a father, the situation was intolerable. At his age a man no longer dissimulates in his own family; he became more and more thoughtful, serious, and grieved as the hour approached when he would be forced to meet his civil death. This evening covered one of those crises in the inner life of man which can only be expressed by imagery. The thunderclouds were gathering in the sky, people were laughing in the fields; all felt the heat and knew the storm was coming, but they held up their heads and continued on their way. Monsieur Conyncks was the first to leave the room, conducted by Balthazar to his chamber. During the latter's absence Pierquin and Monsieur de Solis went away. Marguerite bade the notary good-night with much affection; she said nothing to Emmanuel, but she pressed his hand and gave him a tearful glance. She sent Félicie away, and when Claës returned to the parlor he found his daughter alone.

"My kind father," she said in a trembling voice, "nothing could have made me leave home but the serious position in which we found ourselves; but now, after much anxiety, after surmounting the greatest

difficulties, I return with some chances of deliverance for all of us. Thanks to your name, and to my uncle's influence, and to the support of Monsieur de Solis, we have obtained for you an appointment under government as receiver of customs in Bretagne; the place is worth, they say, eighteen to twenty thousand francs a year. Our uncle has given bonds as your security. Here is the nomination," she added, drawing a paper from her bag. "Your life in Douai, in this house, during the coming years of privation and sacrifice would be intolerable to you. Our father must be placed in a situation at least equal to that in which he has always lived. I ask nothing from the salary you will receive from this appointment; employ it as you see fit. I will only beg you to remember that we have not a penny of income, and that we must live on what Gabriel can give us out of his. The town shall know nothing of our inner life. If you were still to live in this house you would be an obstacle to the means my sister and I are about to employ to restore comfort and ease to the home. Have I abused the authority you gave me by putting you in a position to remake your own fortune? In a few years, if you so will, you can easily become the receiver-general."

"In other words, Marguerite," said Balthazar, gently, "you turn me out of my own house."

"I do not deserve that bitter reproach," replied the

daughter, quelling the tumultuous beatings of her heart. "You will come back to us when you are able to live in your native town in a manner becoming to your dignity. Besides, father, I have your promise. You are bound to obey me. My uncle has stayed here that he might himself accompany you to Bretagne, and not leave you to make the journey alone."

"I shall not go," said Balthazar, rising; "I need no help from any one to restore my property and pay what I owe to my children."

"It would be better, certainly," replied Marguerite, calmly. "But now I ask you to reflect on our respective situations, which I will explain in a few words. If you stay in this house your children will leave it, so that you may remain its master."

"Marguerite!" cried Balthazar.

"In that case," she said, continuing her words without taking notice of her father's anger, "it will be necessary to notify the minister of your refusal, if you decide not to accept this honorable and lucrative post, which, in spite of our many efforts, we should never have obtained but for certain thousand-franc notes my uncle slipped into the glove of a lady."

"My children leave me!" he exclaimed.

"You must leave us or we must leave you," she said. "If I were your only child, I should do as my mother did, without murmuring against my fate; but

my brothers and my sister shall not perish beside you with hunger and despair. I promised it to her who died there," she said, pointing to the place where her mother's bed had stood. "We have hidden our troubles from you; we have suffered in silence; our strength is gone. My father, we are not on the edge of an abyss, we are at the bottom of it. Courage is not sufficient to drag us out of it; our efforts must not be incessantly brought to nought by the caprices of a passion."

"My dear children," cried Balthazar, seizing Marguerite's hand, "I will help you, I will work, I —"

"Here is the means," she answered, showing him the official letter.

"But, my darling, the means you offer me are too slow; you make me lose the fruits of ten years' work, and the enormous sums of money which my laboratory represents. There," he said, pointing towards the garret, "are our real resources."

Marguerite walked towards the door, saying, —

"Father, you must choose."

"Ah! my daughter, you are very hard," he replied, sitting down in an armchair and allowing her to leave him.

The next morning, on coming downstairs, Marguerite learned from Lemulquinier that Monsieur Claës had gone out. This simple announcement turned her pale;

her face was so painfully significant that the old valet remarked hastily : —

“ Don’t be troubled, mademoiselle ; monsieur said he would be back at eleven o’clock to breakfast. He did n’t go to bed all night. At two in the morning he was still standing in the parlor, looking through the window at the laboratory. I was waiting up in the kitchen ; I saw him ; he wept ; he is in trouble. Here’s the famous month of July when the sun is able to enrich us all, and if you only would — ”

“ Enough,” said Marguerite, divining the thoughts that must have assailed her father’s mind.

A phenomenon which often takes possession of persons leading sedentary lives had seized upon Balthazar ; his life depended, so to speak, on the places with which it was identified ; his thought was so wedded to his laboratory and to the house he lived in that both were indispensable to him, — just as the Bourse becomes a necessity to a stock-gambler, to whom the public holidays are so much lost time. Here were his hopes ; here the heavens contained the only atmosphere in which his lungs could breathe the breath of life. This alliance of places and things with men, which is so powerful in feeble natures, becomes almost tyrannical in men of science and students. To leave his house was, for Balthazar, to renounce Science, to abandon the Problem, — it was death.

Marguerite was a prey to anxiety until the breakfast hour. The former scene in which Balthazar had meant to kill himself came back to her memory, and she feared some tragic end to the desperate situation in which her father was placed. She came and went restlessly about the parlor, and quivered every time the bell or the street-door sounded.

At last Balthazar returned. As he crossed the courtyard Marguerite studied his face anxiously and could see nothing but an expression of stormy grief. When he entered the parlor she went towards him to bid him good-morning; he caught her affectionately round the waist, pressed her to his heart, kissed her brow, and whispered, —

“ I have been to get my passport.”

The tones of his voice, his resigned look, his feeble movements, crushed the poor girl's heart; she turned away her head to conceal her tears, and then, unable to repress them, she went into the garden to weep at her ease. During breakfast, Balthazar showed the cheerfulness of a man who had come to a decision.

“ So we are to start for Bretagne, uncle,” he said to Monsieur Conyncks. “ I have always wished to go there.”

“ It is a place where one can live cheaply,” replied the old man.

“ Is our father going away ? ” cried Félicie.

Monsieur de Solis entered, bringing Jean.

“ You must leave him with me to-day,” said Balthazar, putting his son beside him. “ I am going away to-morrow, and I want to bid him good-by.”

Emmanuel glanced at Marguerite, who held down her head. It was a gloomy day for the family ; every one was sad, and tried to repress both thoughts and tears. This was not an absence, it was an exile. All instinctively felt the humiliation of the father in thus publicly declaring his ruin by accepting an office and leaving his family, at Balthazar’s age. At this crisis he was great, while Marguerite was firm ; he seemed to accept nobly the punishment of faults which the tyrannous power of genius had forced him to commit. When the evening was over, and father and daughter were again alone, Balthazar, who throughout the day had shown himself tender and affectionate as in the first years of his fatherhood, held out his hand and said to Marguerite with a tenderness that was mingled with despair, —

“ Are you satisfied with your father ? ”

“ You are worthy of *him*,” said Marguerite, pointing to the portrait of Van Claës.

The next morning Balthazar, followed by Lemulquinier, went up to the laboratory, as if to bid farewell to the hopes he had so fondly cherished, and which in that scene of his toil were living things to him.

Master and man looked at each other sadly as they entered the garret they were about to leave, perhaps forever. Balthazar gazed at the various instruments over which his thoughts so long had brooded ; each was connected with some experiment or some research. He sadly ordered Lemulquinier to evaporate the gases and the dangerous acids, and to separate all substances which might produce explosions. While taking these precautions, he gave way to bitter regrets, like those uttered by a condemned man before going to the scaffold.

“ Here,” he said, stopping before a china capsule in which two wires of a voltaic pile were dipped, “ is an experiment whose results ought to be watched. If it succeeds — dreadful thought ! — my children will have driven from their home a father who could fling diamonds at their feet. In a combination of carbon and sulphur,” he went on, speaking to himself, “ carbon plays the part of an electro-positive substance ; the crystallization ought to begin at the negative pole ; and in case of decomposition, the carbon would crop into crystals — ”

“ Ah ! is that how it would be ? ” said Lemulquinier, contemplating his master with admiration.

“ Now here,” continued Balthazar, after a pause, “ the combination is subject to the influence of the galvanic battery which may act — ”

“If monsieur wishes, I can increase its force.”

“No, no; leave it as it is. Perfect stillness and time are the conditions of crystallization — ”

“Confound it, it takes time enough, that crystallization,” cried the old valet impatiently.

“If the temperature goes down, the sulphide of carbon will crystallize,” said Balthazar, continuing to give forth shreds of indistinct thoughts which were parts of a complete conception in his own mind; “but if the battery works under certain conditions of which I am ignorant — it must be watched carefully — it is quite possible that — Ah! what am I thinking of? It is no longer a question of chemistry, my friend; we are to keep accounts in Bretagne.”

Claës rushed precipitately from the laboratory, and went downstairs to take a last breakfast with his family, at which Pierquin and Monsieur de Solis were present. Balthazar, hastening to end the agony Science had imposed upon him, bade his children farewell and got into the carriage with his uncle, all the family accompanying him to the threshold. There, as Marguerite strained her father to her breast with a despairing pressure, he whispered in her ear, “You are a good girl; I bear you no ill-will;” then she darted through the court-yard into the parlor, and flung herself on her knees upon the spot where her mother had died, and prayed to God to give her strength to accomplish the

hard task that lay before her. She was already strengthened by an inward voice, sounding in her heart the encouragement of angels and the gratitude of her mother, when her sister, her brother, Emmanuel, and Pierquin came in, after watching the carriage until it disappeared.

XIV.

“AND now, mademoiselle, what do you intend to do!” said Pierquin.

“Save the family,” she answered simply. “We own nearly thirteen hundred acres at Waignies. I intend to clear them, divide them into three farms, put up the necessary buildings, and then let them. I believe that in a few years, with patience and great economy, each of us,” motioning to her sister and brother, “will have a farm of over four hundred acres, which may bring in, some day, a rental of nearly fifteen thousand francs. My brother Gabriel will have this house, and all that now stands in his name on the Grand-Livre, for his portion. We shall then be able to redeem our father’s property and return it to him free from all encumbrance, by devoting our incomes, each of us, to paying off his debts.”

“But, my dear cousin,” said the lawyer, amazed at Marguerite’s understanding of business and her cool judgment, “you will need at least two hundred thousand francs to clear the land, build your houses, and purchase cattle. Where will you get such a sum?”

“That is where my difficulties begin,” she said, looking alternately at Pierquin and de Solis; “I cannot ask it from my uncle, who has already spent much money for us and has given bonds as my father’s security.”

“You have friends!” cried Pierquin, suddenly perceiving that the demoiselles Claës were “four-hundred-thousand-franc girls,” after all.

Emmanuel de Solis looked tenderly at Marguerite. Pierquin, unfortunately for himself, was a notary still, even in the midst of his enthusiasm, and he promptly added, —

“I will lend you these two hundred thousand francs.”

Marguerite and Emmanuel consulted each other with a glance which was a flash of light to Pierquin; Félicie colored highly, much gratified to find her cousin as generous as she desired him to be. She looked at her sister, who suddenly guessed the fact that during her absence the poor girl had allowed herself to be caught by Pierquin’s meaningless gallantries.

“You shall only pay me five per cent interest,” went on the lawyer, “and refund the money whenever it is convenient to do so; I will take a mortgage on your property. And don’t be uneasy; you shall only have the outlay on your improvements to pay; I will find you trustworthy farmers, and do all your business gratuitously, so as to help you like a good relation.”

Emmanuel made Marguerite a sign to refuse the

offer, but she was too much occupied in studying the changes of her sister's face to perceive it. After a slight pause, she looked at the notary with an amused smile, and answered of her own accord, to the great joy of Monsieur de Solis : —

“ You are indeed a good relation, — I expected nothing less of you ; but an interest of five per cent would delay our release too long. I shall wait till my brother is of age, and then we will sell out what he has in the Funds.”

Pierquin bit his lip. Emmanuel smiled quietly.

“ Félicie, my dear child, take Jean back to school ; Martha will go with you,” said Marguerite to her sister. “ Jean, my angel, be a good boy ; don't tear your clothes, for we shall not be rich enough to buy you as many new ones as we did. Good-by, little one ; study hard.”

Félicie carried off her brother.

“ Cousin,” said Marguerite to Pierquin, “ and you, monsieur,” she said to Monsieur de Solis, “ I know you have been to see my father during my absence, and I thank you for that proof of friendship. You will not do less I am sure for two poor girls who will be in need of counsel. Let us understand each other. When I am at home I shall receive you both with the greatest pleasure, but when Félicie is here alone with Josette and Martha, I need not tell you that she ought to see

no one, not even an old friend or the most devoted of relatives. Under the circumstances in which we are placed, our conduct must be irreproachable. We are vowed to toil and solitude for a long, long time."

There was silence for some minutes. Emmanuel, absorbed in contemplation of Marguerite's head, seemed dumb. Pierquin did not know what to say. He took leave of his cousin with feelings of rage against himself; for he suddenly perceived that Marguerite loved Emmanuel, and that he, Pierquin, had just behaved like a fool.

"Pierquin, my friend," he said, apostrophizing himself in the street, "if a man said you were an idiot he would tell the truth. What a fool I am! I've got twelve thousand francs a year outside of my business, without counting what I am to inherit from my uncle des Racquets, which is likely to double my fortune (not that I wish him dead, he is so economical), and I've had the madness to ask interest from Mademoiselle Claës! I know those two are jeering at me now! I must n't think of Marguerite any more. No. After all, Félicie is a sweet, gentle little creature, who will suit me much better. Marguerite's character is iron; she would want to rule me — and — she would rule me. Come, come, let's be generous; I wish I was not so much of a lawyer: am I never to get that harness off my back? Bless my soul! I'll begin to fall in love

with Félicie, and I won't budge from that sentiment. She will have a farm of four hundred and thirty acres, which, sooner or later, will be worth twelve or fifteen thousand francs a year, for the soil about Waignies is excellent. Just let my old uncle des Racquets die, poor dear man, and I'll sell my practice and be a man of leisure, with fifty — thou — sand:—francs — a — year. My wife is a Claës, I'm allied to the great families. The deuce! we'll see if those Courtevelles and Magalhens and Savaron de Savarus will refuse to come and dine with a Pierquin-Claës-Molina-Nourho. I shall be mayor of Douai; I'll obtain the cross, and get to be deputy — in short, everything. Ha, ha! Pierquin, my boy, now keep yourself in hand; no more nonsense, because — yes, on my word of honor — Félicie — Mademoiselle Félicie Van Claës — loves you!"

When the lovers were left alone Emmanuel held out his hand to Marguerite, who did not refuse to put her right hand into it. They rose with one impulse and moved towards their bench in the garden; but as they reached the middle of the parlor, the lover could not resist his joy, and, in a voice that trembled with emotion, he said, —

"I have three hundred thousand francs of yours."

"What!" she cried, "did my poor mother intrust them to you? No? then where did you get them."

“ Oh, my Marguerite ! all that is mine is yours. Was it not you who first said the word ‘ ourselves ’ ? ”

“ Dear Emmanuel ! ” she exclaimed, pressing the hand which still held hers ; and then, instead of going into the garden, she threw herself into a low chair.

“ It is for me to thank you,” he said, with the voice of love, “ since you accept all.”

“ Oh, my dear beloved one,” she cried, “ this moment effaces many a grief and brings the happy future nearer. Yes, I accept your fortune,” she continued, with the smile of an angel upon her lips, “ I know the way to make it mine.”

She looked up at the picture of Van Claës as if calling him to witness. The young man’s eyes followed those of Marguerite, and he did not notice that she took a ring from her finger until he heard the words : —

“ From the depths of our greatest misery one comfort rises. My father’s indifference leaves me the free disposal of myself,” she said, holding out the ring. “ Take it, Emmanuel. My mother valued you — she would have chosen you.”

The young man turned pale with emotion and fell on his knees beside her, offering in return a ring which he always wore.

“ This is my mother’s wedding-ring,” he said, kissing it. “ My Marguerite, am I to have no other pledge than this ? ”

She stooped a little till her forehead met his lips.

“Alas, dear love,” she said, greatly agitated, “are we not doing wrong? We have so long to wait!”

“My uncle used to say that adoration was the daily bread of patience, — he spoke of Christians who love God. That is how I love you; I have long mingled my love for you with my love for Him. I am yours as I am His.”

They remained for a few moments in the power of this sweet enthusiasm. It was the calm, sincere effusion of a feeling which, like an overflowing spring, poured forth its superabundance in little wavelets. The events which separated these lovers produced a melancholy which only made their happiness the keener, giving it a sense of something sharp, like pain.

Félicie came back too soon. Emmanuel, inspired by that delightful tact of love which discerns all feelings, left the sisters alone, — exchanging a look with Marguerite to let her know how much this discretion cost him, how hungry his soul was for that happiness so long desired, which had just been consecrated by the betrothal of their hearts.

“Come here, little sister,” said Marguerite, taking Félicie round the neck. Then, passing into the garden they sat down on the bench where generation after generation had confided to listening hearts their words of love, their sighs of grief, their meditations and their

projects. In spite of her sister's joyous tone and lively manner, Félicie experienced a sensation that was very like fear. Marguerite took her hand and felt it tremble.

"Mademoiselle Félicie," said the elder, with her lips at her sister's ear. "I read your soul. Pierquin has been here often in my absence, and he has said sweet words to you, and you have listened to them." Félicie blushed. "Don't defend yourself, my angel," continued Marguerite, "it is so natural to love! Perhaps your dear nature will improve his; he is egotistical and self-interested, but for all that he is a good man, and his defects may even add to your happiness. He will love you as the best of his possessions; you will be a part of his business affairs. Forgive me this one word, dear love; you will soon correct the bad habit he has acquired of seeing money in everything, by teaching him the business of the heart."

Félicie could only kiss her sister.

"Besides," added Marguerite, "he has property; and his family belongs to the highest and the oldest bourgeoisie. But you don't think I would oppose your happiness even if the conditions were less prosperous, do you?"

Félicie let fall the words, "Dear sister."

"Yes, you may confide in me," cried Marguerite, "sisters can surely tell each other their secrets."

These words, so full of heartiness, opened the way

to one of those delightful conversations in which young girls tell all. When Marguerite, expert in love, reached an understanding of the real state of Félicie's heart, she wound up their talk by saying:—

“Well, dear child, let us make sure he truly loves you, and — then —”

“Ah!” cried Félicie, laughing, “leave me to my own devices; I have a model before my eyes.”

“Saucy child!” exclaimed Marguerite, kissing her.

Though Pierquin belonged to the class of men who regard marriage as the accomplishment of a social duty and the means of transmitting property, and though he was indifferent to which sister he should marry so long as both had the same name and the same dower, he did perceive that the two were, to use his own expression, “romantic and sentimental girls,” adjectives employed by commonplace people to ridicule the gifts which Nature sows with grudging hand along the furrows of humanity. The lawyer no doubt said to himself that he had better swim with the stream; and accordingly the next day he came to see Marguerite, and took her mysteriously into the little garden, where he began to talk sentiment, — that being one of the clauses of the primal contract which, according to social usage, must precede the notarial contract.

“Dear cousin,” he said, “you and I have not always been of one mind as to the best means of bringing your

affairs to a happy conclusion ; but you do now, I am sure, admit that I have always been guided by a great desire to be useful to you. Well, yesterday I spoiled my offer by a fatal habit which the legal profession forces upon us—you understand me? My heart did not share in the folly. I have loved you well ; but I have a certain perspicacity, legal perhaps, which obliges me to see that I do not please you. It is my own fault ; another has been more successful than I. Well, I come now to tell you, like an honest man, that I sincerely love your sister Félicie. Treat me therefore as a brother ; accept my purse, take what you will from it, — the more you take the better you prove your regard for me. I am wholly at your service — *without interest*, you understand, neither at twelve nor at one quarter per cent. Let me be thought worthy of Félicie, that is all I ask. Forgive my defects ; they come from business habits ; my heart is good, and I would fling myself into the Scarpe sooner than not make my wife happy.”

“This is all satisfactory, cousin,” answered Marguerite ; “but my sister’s choice depends upon herself and also on my father’s will.”

“I know that, my dear cousin,” said the lawyer, “but you are the mother of the whole family ; and I have nothing more at heart than that you should judge me rightly.”

This conversation paints the mind of the honest notary. Later in life, Pierquin became celebrated by his reply to the commanding officer at Saint-Omer, who had invited him to be present at a military fête; the note ran as follows: "Monsieur Pierquin-Claës de Molina-Nourho, mayor of the city of Douai, chevalier of the Legion of honor, will have *that* of being present, etc."

Marguerite accepted the lawyer's offer only so far as it related to his professional services, so that she might not in any degree compromise either her own dignity as a woman, or her sister's future, or her father's authority.

The next day she confided Félicie to the care of Martha and Josette (who vowed themselves body and soul to their young mistress, and seconded all her economies), and started herself for Waignies, where she began operations, which were judiciously overlooked and directed by Pierquin. Devotion was now set down as a good speculation in the mind of that worthy man; his care and trouble were in fact an investment, and he had no wish to be niggardly in making it. First he contrived to save Marguerite the trouble of clearing the land and working the ground intended for the farms. He found three young men, sons of rich farmers, who were anxious to settle themselves in life, and he succeeded, through the prospect he held out to them of the fertility of the land, in making them take leases of

the three farms on which the buildings were to be constructed. To gain possession of the farms rent-free for three years the tenants bound themselves to pay ten thousand francs a year the fourth year, twelve thousand the sixth year, and fifteen thousand for the remainder of the term; to drain the land, make the plantations, and purchase the cattle. While the buildings were being put up the farmers were to clear the land.

Four years after Balthazar Claës's departure from his home Marguerite had almost recovered the property of her brothers and sister. Two hundred thousand francs, lent to her by Emmanuel, had sufficed to put up the farm buildings. Neither help nor counsel was withheld from the brave girl, whose conduct excited the admiration of the whole town. Marguerite superintended the buildings, and looked after her contracts and leases with the good sense, activity, and perseverance, which women know so well how to call up when they are actuated by a strong sentiment. By the fifth year she was able to apply thirty thousand francs from the rental of the farms, together with the income from the Funds standing in her brother's name, and the proceeds of her father's property, towards paying off the mortgages on that property and repairing the devastation which her father's passion had wrought in the old mansion of the Claës. This redemption went on more

rapidly as the interest account decreased. Emmanuel de Solis persuaded Marguerite to take the remaining one hundred thousand francs of his uncle's bequest, and by joining to it twenty thousand francs of his own savings, pay off in the third year of her management a large slice of the debts. This life of courage, privation, and endurance was never relaxed for five years; but all went well, — everything prospered under the administration and influence of Marguerite Claës.

Gabriel, now holding an appointment under government as engineer in the department of Roads and Bridges, made a rapid fortune, aided by his great-uncle, in a canal which he was able to construct; moreover, he succeeded in pleasing his cousin Mademoiselle Conyncks, the idol of her father, and one of the richest heiresses in Flanders. In 1824 the whole Claës property was free, and the house in the rue de Paris had repaired its losses. Pierquin made a formal application to Balthazar for the hand of Félicie, and Monsieur de Solis did the same for that of Marguerite.

At the beginning of January, 1825, Marguerite and Monsieur Conyncks left Douai to bring home the exiled father, whose return was eagerly desired by all, and who had sent in his resignation that he might return to his family and crown their happiness by his presence. Marguerite had often expressed a regret at not being able to replace the pictures which had formerly adorned

the gallery and the reception-rooms, before the day when her father would return as master of his house. In her absence Pierquin and Monsieur de Solis plotted with Félicie to prepare a surprise which should make the younger sister a sharer in the restoration of the House of Claës. The two bought a number of fine pictures, which they presented to Félicie to decorate the gallery. Monsieur Conyncks had thought of the same thing. Wishing to testify to Marguerite the satisfaction he had taken in her noble conduct and in the self-devotion with which she had fulfilled her mother's dying mandate, he arranged that fifty of his fine pictures, among them several of those which Balthazar had formerly sold, should be brought to Douai in Marguerite's absence, so that the Claës gallery might once more be complete.

During the years that had elapsed since Balthazar Claës left his home, Marguerite had visited her father several times, accompanied by her sister or by Jean. Each time she had found him more and more changed; but since her last visit old age had come upon Balthazar with alarming symptoms, the gravity of which was much increased by the parsimony with which he lived that he might spend the greater part of his salary in experiments the results of which forever disappointed him. Though he was only sixty-five years of age, he appeared to be eighty. His eyes were sunken in their orbits, his

eyebrows had whitened, only a few hairs remained as a fringe around his skull; he allowed his beard to grow, and cut it off with scissors when its length annoyed him; he was bent like a field-laborer, and the condition of his clothes had reached a degree of wretchedness which his decrepitude now rendered hideous. Thought still animated that noble face, whose features were scarcely discernible under its wrinkles; but the fixity of the eyes, a certain desperation of manner, a restless uneasiness, were all diagnostics of insanity, or rather of many forms of insanity. Sometimes a flash of hope gave him the look of a monomaniac; at other times impatient anger at not seizing a secret which flitted before his eyes like a will o' the wisp brought symptoms of madness into his face; or sudden bursts of maniacal laughter betrayed his irrationality: but during the greater part of the time, he was sunk in a state of complete depression which combined all the phases of insanity in the cold melancholy of an idiot. However fleeting and imperceptible these symptoms may have been to the eye of strangers, they were, unfortunately, only too plain to those who had known Balthazar Claës sublime in goodness, noble in heart, stately in person, — a Claës of whom, alas, scarcely a vestige now remained.

Lemulquinier, grown old and wasted like his master with incessant toil, had not, like him, been subjected to

the ravages of thought. The expression of the old valet's face showed a singular mixture of anxiety and admiration for his master which might easily have misled an onlooker. Though he listened to Balthazar's words with respect, and followed his every movement with tender solicitude, he took charge of the servant of science very much as a mother takes care of her child, and even seemed to protect him, because in the vulgar details of life, to which Balthazar gave no thought, he actually did protect him. These old men, wrapped in one idea, confident of the reality of their hope, stirred by the same breath, the one representing the shell, the other the soul of their mutual existence, formed a spectacle at once tender and distressing.

When Marguerite and Monsieur de Conyncks arrived, they found Claës living at an inn. His successor had not been kept waiting, and was already in possession of his office.

XV.

THROUGH all the preoccupations of science, the desire to see his native town, his house, his family, agitated Balthazar's mind. His daughter's letters had told him of the happy family events; he dreamed of crowning his career by a series of experiments that must lead to the solution of the great Problem, and he awaited Marguerite's arrival with extreme impatience.

The daughter threw herself into her father's arms and wept for joy. This time she came to seek a recompense for years of pain, and pardon for the exercise of her domestic authority. She seemed to herself criminal, like those great men who violate the liberties of the people for the safety of the nation. But she shuddered as she now contemplated her father and saw the change which had taken place in him since her last visit. Monsieur Conyncks shared the secret alarm of his niece, and insisted on taking Balthazar as soon as possible to Douai, where the influence of his native place might restore him to health and reason amid the happiness of a recovered domestic life.

After the first transports of the heart were over, — which were far warmer on Balthazar's part than Marguerite had expected, — he showed a singular state of feeling towards his daughter. He expressed regret at receiving her in a miserable inn, inquired her tastes and wishes, and asked what she would have to eat, with the eagerness of a lover ; his manner was even that of a culprit seeking to propitiate a judge.

Marguerite knew her father so well that she guessed the motive of this solicitude ; she felt sure he had contracted debts in the town which he wished to pay before his departure. She observed him carefully for a time, and saw the human heart in all its nakedness. Balthazar had dwindled from his true self. The consciousness of his abasement, and the isolation of his life in the pursuit of science made him timid and childish in all matters not connected with his favorite occupations. His daughter awed him ; the remembrance of her past devotion, of the energy she had displayed, of the powers he had allowed her to take away from him, of the wealth now at her command, and the indefinable feelings that had preyed upon him ever since the day when he had abdicated a paternity he had long neglected, — all these things affected his mind towards her, and increased her importance in his eyes. Conyncks was nothing to him beside Marguerite ; he saw only his daughter, he thought

only of her, and seemed to fear her, as certain weak husbands fear a superior woman who rules them. When he raised his eyes and looked at her, Marguerite noticed with distress an expression of fear, like that of a child detected in a fault. The noble girl was unable to reconcile the majestic and terrible expression of that bald head, denuded by science and by toil, with the puerile smile, the eager servility exhibited on the lips and countenance of the old man. She suffered from the contrast of that greatness to that littleness, and resolved to use her utmost influence to restore her father's sense of dignity before the solemn day on which he was to reappear in the bosom of his family. Her first step when they were alone was to ask him, —

“Do you owe anything here?”

Balthazar colored, and replied with an embarrassed air: —

“I don't know, but Lemulquinier can tell you. That worthy fellow knows more about my affairs than I do myself.”

Marguerite rang for the valet: when he came she studied, almost involuntarily, the faces of the two old men.

“What does monsieur want?” asked Lemulquinier.

Marguerite, who was all pride and dignity, felt an oppression at her heart as she perceived from the tone and manner of the servant that some mortifying

familiarity had grown up between her father and the companion of his labors.

“My father cannot make out the account of what he owes in this place without you,” she said.

“Monsieur,” began Lemulquinier, “owes —”

At these words Balthazar made a sign to his valet which Marguerite intercepted; it humiliated her.

“Tell me all that my father owes,” she said.

“Monsieur owes, here, about three thousand francs to an apothecary who is a wholesale dealer in drugs; he has supplied us with pearl-ash and lead, and zinc and the reagents —”

“Is that all?” asked Marguerite.

Again Balthazar made a sign to Lemulquinier, who replied, as if under a spell, —

“Yes, mademoiselle.”

“Very good,” she said, “I will give them to you.”

Balthazar kissed her joyously and said, —

“You are an angel, my child.”

He breathed at his ease and glanced at her with eyes that were less sad; and yet, in spite of this apparent joy, Marguerite easily detected the signs of deep anxiety upon his face, and felt certain that the three thousand francs represented only the pressing debts of his laboratory.

“Be frank with me, father,” she said, letting him seat her on his knee; “you owe more than that. Tell me

all, and come back to your home without an element of fear in the midst of the general joy."

"My dear Marguerite," he said, taking her hands and kissing them with a grace that seemed a memory of his youth, "you would scold me—"

"No," she said.

"Truly?" he asked, giving way to childish expressions of delight. "Can I tell you all? will you pay—"

"Yes," she said, repressing the tears which came into her eyes.

"Well, I owe—oh! I dare not—"

"Tell me, father."

"It is a great deal."

She clasped her hands, with a gesture of despair.

"I owe thirty thousand francs to Messieurs Protez and Chiffreville."

"Thirty thousand francs," she said, "is just the sum I have laid by. I am glad to give it to you," she added, respectfully kissing his brow.

He rose, took his daughter in his arms and whirled about the room, dancing her as though she were an infant; then he placed her in the chair where she had been sitting, and exclaimed:—

"My darling child! my treasure of love! I was half-dead: the Chiffrevilles have written me three threatening letters; they were about to sue me,—me, who would have made their fortune!"

“Father,” said Marguerite in accents of despair, “are you still searching?”

“Yes, still searching,” he said, with the smile of a madman, “and I shall FIND. If you could only understand the point we have reached —”

“We? who are we?”

“I mean Mulquinier : he has understood me, he loves me. Poor fellow ! he is devoted to me.”

Conyncks entered at the moment and interrupted the conversation. Marguerite made a sign to her father to say no more, fearing lest he should lower himself in her uncle’s eyes. She was frightened at the ravages thought had made in that noble mind, absorbed in searching for the solution of a problem that was perhaps insoluble. Balthazar, who saw and knew nothing outside of his furnaces, seemed not to realize the liberation of his fortune.

On the morrow they started for Flanders. During the journey Marguerite gained some confused light upon the position in which Lemulquinier and her father stood to each other. The valet had acquired an ascendancy over his master such as common men without education are able to obtain over great minds to whom they feel themselves necessary ; such men, taking advantage of concession after concession, aim at complete dominion with the persistency that comes of a fixed idea. In this case the master had contracted

for the man the sort of affection that grows out of habit, like that of a workman for his creative tool, or an Arab for the horse that gives him freedom. Marguerite studied the signs of this tyranny, resolving to withdraw her father from its humiliating yoke if it were real.

They stopped several days in Paris on the way home, to enable Marguerite to pay off her father's debts and request the manufacturers of chemical products to send nothing to Douai without first informing her of any orders given by Claës. She persuaded her father to change his style of dress and buy clothes that were suitable to a man of his station. This corporal restoration gave Balthazar a certain physical dignity which augured well for a change in his ideas ; and Marguerite, joyous in the thought of all the surprises that awaited her father when he entered his own house, started for Douai.

Nine miles from the town Balthazar was met by Félicie on horseback, escorted by her two brothers, Emmanuel, Pierquin, and some of the nearest friends of the three families. The journey had necessarily diverted the chemist's mind from its habitual thoughts ; the aspect of his own Flanders acted on his heart ; when, therefore, he saw the joyous company of his family and friends gathering about him his emotion was so keen that the tears came to his eyes, his voice trembled, his

eyelids reddened, and he held his children in so passionate an embrace, seeming unable to release them, that the spectators of the scene were moved to tears.

When at last he saw the House of Claës he turned pale, and sprang from the carriage with the agility of a young man ; he breathed the air of the court-yard with delight, and looked about him at the smallest details with a pleasure that could express itself only in gestures : he drew himself erect, and his whole countenance renewed its youth. The tears came into his eyes when he entered the parlor and noticed the care with which his daughter had replaced the old silver candelabra that he formerly had sold, — a visible sign that all the other disasters had been repaired. Breakfast was served in the dining-room, whose sideboards and shelves were covered with curios and silver-ware not less valuable than the treasures that formerly stood there. Though the family meal lasted a long time, it was still too short for the narratives which Balthazar exacted from each of his children. The reaction of his moral being caused by this return to his home wedded him once more to family happiness, and he was again a father. His manners recovered their former dignity. At first the delight of recovering possession kept him from dwelling on the means by which the recovery had been brought about. His joy therefore was full and unalloyed.

Breakfast over, the four children, the father and Pierquin went into the parlor, where Balthazar saw with some uneasiness a number of legal papers which the notary's clerk had laid upon a table, by which he was standing as if to assist his chief. The children all sat down, and Balthazar, astonished, remained standing before the fireplace.

"This," said Pierquin, "is the guardianship account which Monsieur Claës renders to his children. It is not very amusing," he added, laughing after the manner of notaries who generally assume a lively tone in speaking of serious matters, "but I must really oblige you to listen to it."

Though the phrase was natural enough under the circumstances, Monsieur Claës, whose conscience recalled his past life, felt it to be a reproach, and his brow clouded.

The clerk began the reading. Balthazar's amazement increased as little by little the statement unfolded the facts. In the first place, the fortune of his wife at the time of her decease was declared to have been sixteen hundred thousand francs or thereabouts; and the summing up of the account showed clearly that the portion of each child was intact and as well-invested as if the best and wisest father had controlled it. In consequence of this the House of Claës was free from all lien, Balthazar was master of it; moreover, his rural property

was likewise released from incumbrance. When all the papers connected with these matters were signed, Pierquin presented the receipts for the repayment of the moneys formerly borrowed, and releases of the various liens on the estates.

Balthazar, conscious that he had recovered the honor of his manhood, the life of a father, the dignity of a citizen, fell into a chair, and looked about for Marguerite; but she, with the instinctive delicacy of her sex, had left the room during the reading of the papers, as if to see that all the arrangements for the fête were properly prepared. Each member of the family understood the old man's wish when the failing humid eyes sought for the daughter, — who was seen by all present, with the eyes of the soul, as an angel of strength and light within the house. Gabriel went to find her. Hearing her step, Balthazar ran to clasp her in his arms.

“Father,” she said, at the foot of the stairs, where the old man caught her and strained her to his breast, “I implore you not to lessen your sacred authority. Thank me before the family for carrying out your wishes, and be the sole author of the good that has been done here.”

Balthazar lifted his eyes to heaven, then looked at his daughter, folded his arms, and said, after a pause, during which his face recovered an expression his children had not seen upon it for ten long years, —

“Pépita, why are you not here to praise our child!”

He strained Marguerite to him, unable to utter another word, and went back to the parlor.

“My children,” he said, with the nobility of demeanor that in former days had made him so imposing, “we all owe gratitude and thanks to my daughter Marguerite for the wisdom and courage with which she has fulfilled my intentions and carried out my plans, when I, too absorbed by my labors, gave the reins of our domestic government into her hands.”

“Ah, now!” cried Pierquin, looking at the clock, “we must read the marriage contracts. But they are not my affair, for the law forbids me to draw up such deeds between my relations and myself. Monsieur Raparlier is coming.”

The friends of the family, invited to the dinner given to celebrate Claës’s return and the signing of the marriage contracts, now began to arrive; and their servants brought in the wedding-presents. The company quickly assembled, and the scene was imposing as much from the quality of the persons present as from the elegance of the toilettes. The three families, thus united through the happiness of their children, seemed to vie with each other in contributing to the splendor of the occasion. The parlor was soon filled with the charming gifts that are made to bridal couples. Gold shimmered and glistened; silks and satins, cashmere

shawls, necklaces, jewels, afforded as much delight to those who gave as to those who received; enjoyment that was almost childlike shone on every face, and the mere value of the magnificent presents was lost sight of by the spectators, — who often busy themselves in estimating it out of curiosity.

The ceremonial forms used for generations in the Claës family for solemnities of this nature now began. The parents alone were seated, all present stood before them at a little distance. To the left of the parlor on the garden side were Gabriel and Mademoiselle Conyncks, next to them stood Monsieur de Solis and Marguerite, and farther on, Félicie and Pierquin. Balthazar and Monsieur Conyncks, the only persons who were seated, occupied two armchairs beside the notary who, for this occasion, had taken Pierquin's duty. Jean stood behind his father. A score of ladies elegantly dressed, and a few men chosen from among the nearest relatives of the Pierquins, the Conyncks, and the Claës, the mayor of Douai, who was to marry the couples, the twelve witnesses chosen from among the nearest friends of the three families, all, even the curate of Saint-Pierre, remained standing and formed an imposing circle at the end of the parlor next the court-yard. This homage paid by the whole assembly to Paternity, which at such a moment shines with almost regal majesty, gave to the scene a certain antique character. It

was the only moment for sixteen long years when Balthazar forgot the Alkahest.

Monsieur Raparlier went up to Marguerite and her sister and asked if all the persons invited to the ceremony and to the dinner had arrived; on receiving an affirmative reply, he returned to his station and took up the marriage contract between Marguerite and Monsieur de Solis, which was the first to be read, when suddenly the door of the parlor opened and Lemulquinier entered, his face flaming.

“Monsieur! monsieur!” he cried.

Balthazar flung a look of despair at Marguerite, then, making her a sign, he drew her into the garden. The whole assembly were conscious of a shock.

“I dared not tell you, my child,” said the father, “but since you have done so much, you will save me, I know, from this last trouble. Lemulquinier lent me all his savings — the fruit of twenty years’ economy — for my last experiment, which failed. He has come, no doubt, finding that I am once more rich, to insist on having them back. Ah! my angel, give them to him; you owe him your father; he alone consoled me in my troubles, he alone has had faith in me, — without him I should have died.”

“Monsieur! monsieur!” cried Lemulquinier.

“What is it?” said Balthazar, turning round.

“A diamond!”

Claës sprang into the parlor and saw the stone in the hands of the old valet, who whispered in his ear, —

“I have been to the laboratory.”

The chemist, forgetting everything about him, cast a terrible look on the old Fleming which meant, “You went before me to the laboratory!”

“Yes,” continued Lemulquinier, “I found the diamond in the china capsule which communicated with the battery which we left to work, monsieur — and see!” he added, showing a white diamond of octahedral form, whose brilliancy drew the astonished gaze of all present.

“My children, my friends,” said Balthazar, “forgive my old servant, forgive me! This event will drive me mad. The chance work of seven years has produced — without me — a discovery I have sought for sixteen years. How? My God, I know not — yes, I left sulphide of carbon under the influence of a Voltaic pile, whose action ought to have been watched from day to day. During my absence the power of God has worked in my laboratory, but I was not there to note its progressive effects! Is it not awful? Oh, cursed exile! cursed chance! Alas! had I watched that slow, that sudden — what can I call it? — crystallization, transformation, in short that miracle, then, then my children would have been richer still. Though this result is not the solution of the Problem which I seek, the

first rays of my glory would have shone from that diamond upon my native country, and this hour, which our satisfied affections have made so happy, would have glowed with the sunlight of Science."

Every one kept silence in the presence of such a man. The disconnected words wrung from him by his anguish were too sincere not to be sublime.

Suddenly, Balthazar drove back his despair into the depths of his own being, and cast upon the assembly a majestic look which affected the souls of all; he took the diamond and offered it to Marguerite, saying, —

"It is thine, my angel."

Then he dismissed Lemulquinier with a gesture, and motioned to the notary, saying, "Go on."

The two words sent a shudder of emotion through the company such as Talma in certain rôles produced among his auditors. Balthazar, as he reseated himself, said in a low voice, —

"To-day I must be a father only."

Marguerite hearing the words went up to him and caught his hand and kissed it respectfully.

"No man was ever greater," said Emmanuel, when his bride returned to him; "no man was ever so mighty; another would have gone mad."

After the three contracts were read and signed, the company hastened to question Balthazar as to the manner in which the diamond had been formed; but

he could tell them nothing about so strange an accident. He looked through the window at his garret and pointed to it with an angry gesture.

“Yes, the awful power resulting from a movement of fiery matter which no doubt produces metals, diamonds,” he said, “was manifested there for one moment, by one chance.”

“That chance was of course some natural effect,” whispered a guest belonging to the class of people who are ready with an explanation of everything. “At any rate, it is something saved out of all he has wasted.”

“Let us forget it,” said Balthazar, addressing his friends; “I beg you to say no more about it to-day.”

Marguerite took her father’s arm to lead the way to the reception-rooms of the front house, where a sumptuous fête had been prepared. As he entered the gallery, followed by his guests, he beheld it filled with pictures and garnished with choice flowers.

“Pictures!” he exclaimed, “pictures!—and some of the old ones!”

He stopped short; his brow clouded; for a moment grief overcame him; he felt the weight of his wrong-doing as the vista of his humiliation came before his eyes.

“It is all your own, father,” said Marguerite, guessing the feelings that oppressed his soul.

“Angel, whom the spirits in heaven watch and praise,” he cried, “how many times have you given life to your father?”

“Then keep no cloud upon your brow, nor the least sad thought in your heart,” she said, “and you will reward me beyond my hopes. I have been thinking of Lemulquinier, my darling father; the few words you said a little while ago have made me value him; perhaps I have been unjust to him; he ought to remain your humble friend. Emmanuel has laid by nearly sixty thousand francs which he has economized, and we will give them to Lemulquinier. After serving you so well the man ought to be made comfortable for his remaining years. Do not be uneasy about us. Monsieur de Solis and I intend to lead a quiet, peaceful life, — a life without luxury; we can well afford to lend you that money until you are able to return it.”

“Ah, my daughter! never forsake me; continue to be thy father’s providence.”

When they entered the reception-rooms Balthazar found them restored and furnished as elegantly as in former days. The guests presently descended to the dining-room on the ground-floor by the grand staircase, on every step of which were rare plants and flowering shrubs. A silver service of exquisite workmanship, the gift of Gabriel to his father, attracted all eyes to a luxury which was surprising to the inhabitants of

a town where such luxury is traditional. The servants of Monsieur Conyncks and of Pierquin, as well as those of the Claës household, were assembled to serve the repast. Seeing himself once more at the head of that table, surrounded by friends and relatives and happy faces beaming with heartfelt joy, Balthazar, behind whose chair stood Lemulquinier, was overcome by emotions so deep and so imposing that all present kept silence, as men are silent before great sorrows or great joys.

“Dear children,” he cried, “you have killed the fattened calf to welcome home the prodigal father.”

These words, in which the father judged himself (and perhaps prevented others from judging him more severely), were spoken so nobly that all present shed tears; they were the last expression of sadness, however, and the general happiness soon took on the merry, animated character of a family fête.

Immediately after dinner the principal people of the city began to arrive for the ball, which proved worthy of the almost classic splendor of the restored House of Claës. The three marriages followed this happy day, and gave occasion to many fêtes, and balls, and dinners, which involved Balthazar for some months in the vortex of social life. His eldest son and his wife removed to an estate near Cambrai belonging to Monsieur Conyncks, who was unwilling to separate from his

daughter. Madame Pierquin also left her father's house to do the honors of a fine mansion which Pierquin had built, and where he desired to live in all the dignity of rank ; for his practice was sold, and his uncle des Racquets had died and left him a large property scraped together by slow economy. Jean went to Paris to finish his education, and Monsieur and Madame de Solis alone remained with their father in the House of Claës. Balthazar made over to them the family home in the rear house, and took up his own abode on the second floor of the front building.

XVI.

MARGUERITE continued to keep watch over her father's material comfort, aided in the sweet task by Emmanuel. The noble girl received from the hands of love that most envied of all garlands, the wreath that happiness entwines and constancy keeps ever fresh. No couple ever afforded a better illustration of the complete, acknowledged, spotless felicity which all women cherish in their dreams. The union of two beings so courageous in the trials of life, who had loved each other through years with so sacred an affection, drew forth the respectful admiration of the whole community. Monsieur de Solis, who had long held an appointment as inspector-general of the University, resigned those functions to enjoy his happiness more freely, and remained at Douai where every one did such homage to his character and attainments that his name was proposed as candidate for the Electoral college whenever he should reach the required age. Marguerite, who had shown herself so strong in adversity, became in prosperity a sweet and tender woman.

Throughout the following year Claës was grave and

preoccupied ; and yet, though he made a few inexpensive experiments for which his ordinary income sufficed, he seemed to neglect his laboratory. Marguerite restored all the old customs of the House of Claës, and gave a family fête every month in honor of her father, at which the Pierquins and the Conyncks were present ; and she also received the upper ranks of society one day in the week at a “ café ” which became celebrated. Though frequently absent-minded, Claës took part in all these assemblages and became, to please his daughter, so willingly a man of the world that the family were able to believe he had renounced his search for the solution of the great problem.

Three years went by. In 1828 family affairs called Emmanuel de Solis to Spain. Although there were three numerous branches between himself and the inheritance of the house of Solis, yellow fever, old age, barrenness, and other caprices of fortune, combined to make him the last lineal descendant of the family and heir to the titles and estates of his ancient house. Moreover, by one of those curious chances which seem impossible except in a book, the house of Solis had acquired the territory and titles of the Comtes de Nourho. Marguerite did not wish to separate from her husband, who was to stay in Spain long enough to settle his affairs, and she was, moreover, curious to see the castle of Casa-Réal where her mother had passed her

childhood, and the city of Granada, the cradle of the de Solis family. She left Douai, consigning the care of the house to Martha, Josette, and Lemulquinier. Balthazar, to whom Marguerite had proposed a journey into Spain, declined to accompany her on the ground of his advanced age; but certain experiments which he had long meditated, and to which he now trusted for the realization of his hopes were the real reason of his refusal.

The Comte and Comtesse de Solis y Nourho were detained in Spain longer than they intended. Marguerite gave birth to a son. It was not until the middle of 1830 that they reached Cadiz, intending to embark for Italy on their way back to France. There, however, they received a letter from Félicie conveying disastrous news. Within a few months, their father had completely ruined himself. Gabriel and Pierquin were obliged to pay Lemulquinier a monthly stipend for the bare necessities of the household. The old valet had again sacrificed his little property to his master. Balthazar was no longer willing to see any one, and would not even admit his children to the house. Martha and Josette were dead. The coachman, the cook, and the other servants had long been dismissed; the horses and carriages were sold. Though Lemulquinier maintained the utmost secrecy as to his master's proceedings, it was believed that the thousand francs

supplied by Gabriel and Pierquin were spent chiefly on experiments. The small amount of provisions which the old valet purchased in the town seemed to show that the two old men contented themselves with the barest necessities. To prevent the sale of the House of Claës, Gabriel and Pierquin were paying the interest of the sums which their father had again borrowed on it. None of his children had the slightest influence upon the old man, who at seventy years of age displayed extraordinary energy in bending everything to his will, even in matters that were trivial. Gabriel, Conyncks, and Pierquin had decided not to pay off his debts.

This letter changed all Marguerite's travelling plans, and she immediately took the shortest road to Douai. Her new fortune and her past savings enabled her to pay off Balthazar's debts; but she wished to do more, she wished to obey her mother's last injunction and save him from sinking dishonored to the grave. She alone could exercise enough ascendancy over the old man to keep him from completing the work of ruin, at an age when no fruitful toil could be expected from his enfeebled faculties. But she was also anxious to control him without wounding his susceptibilities, — not wishing to imitate the children of Sophocles, in case her father neared the scientific result for which he had sacrificed so much.

Monsieur and Madame de Solis reached Flanders in

the last days of September, 1831, and arrived at Douai during the morning. Marguerite ordered the coachman to drive to the house in the rue de Paris, which they found closed. The bell was loudly rung, but no one answered. A shopkeeper left his door-step, to which he had been attracted by the noise of the carriages; others were at their windows to enjoy a sight of the return of the de Solis family to whom all were attached, enticed also by a vague curiosity as to what would happen in that house on Marguerite's return to it. The shopkeeper told Monsieur de Solis's valet that old Claës had gone out an hour before, and that Monsieur Lemulquinier was no doubt taking him to walk on the ramparts.

Marguerite sent for a locksmith to force the door, — glad to escape a scene in case her father, as Félicie had written, should refuse to admit her into the house. Meantime Emmanuel went to meet the old man and prepare him for the arrival of his daughter, despatching a servant to notify Monsieur and Madame Pierquin.

When the door was opened, Marguerite went directly to the parlor. Horror overcame her and she trembled when she saw the walls as bare as if a fire had swept over them. The glorious carved panellings of Van Huysum and the portrait of the great Claës had been sold. The dining-room was empty: there was nothing in it but two straw chairs and a common deal table, on

which Marguerite, terrified, saw two plates, two bowls, two forks and spoons, and the remains of a salt herring which Claës and his servant had evidently just eaten. In a moment she had flown through her father's portion of the house, every room of which exhibited the same desolation as the parlor and dining-room. The idea of the Alkahest had swept like a conflagration through the building. Her father's bedroom had a bed, one chair, and one table, on which stood a miserable pewter candlestick with a tallow candle burned almost to the socket. The house was so completely stripped that not so much as a curtain remained at the windows. Every object of the smallest value, — everything, even the kitchen utensils, had been sold.

Moved by that feeling of curiosity which never entirely leaves us even in moments of misfortune, Marguerite entered Lemulquinier's chamber and found it as bare as that of his master. In a half-opened table-drawer she saw a pawnbroker's ticket for the old servant's watch which he had pledged some days before. She ran to the laboratory and found it filled with scientific instruments, the same as ever. Then she returned to her own appartement and ordered the door to be broken open — her father had respected it!

Marguerite burst into tears and forgave her father all. In the midst of his devastating fury he had stopped short, restrained by paternal feeling and the gratitude

he owed to his daughter! This proof of tenderness, coming to her at a moment when despair had reached its climax, brought about in Marguerite's soul one of those moral reactions against which the coldest hearts are powerless. She returned to the parlor to wait her father's arrival, in a state of anxiety that was cruelly aggravated by doubt and uncertainty. In what condition was she about to see him? Ruined, decrepit, suffering, enfeebled by the fasts his pride compelled him to undergo? Would he have his reason? Tears flowed unconsciously from her eyes as she looked about the desecrated sanctuary. The images of her whole life, her past efforts, her useless precautions, her childhood, her mother happy and unhappy, — all, even her little Joseph smiling on that scene of desolation, all were parts of a poem of unutterable melancholy.

Marguerite foresaw an approaching misfortune, yet she little expected the catastrophe which was about to close her father's life, — that life at once so grand and yet so miserable.

The condition of Monsieur Claës was no secret in the community. To the lasting shame of men, there were not in all Douai two hearts generous enough to do honor to the perseverance of this man of genius. In the eyes of the world Balthazar was a man to be condemned, a bad father who had squandered six fortunes, millions, who was actually seeking the philosopher's

stone in the nineteenth century, this enlightened century, this sceptical century, this century! — etc. They calumniated his purposes and branded him with the name of “alchemist,” casting up to him in mockery that he was trying to make gold. Ah! what eulogies are uttered on this great century of ours, in which, as in all the others, genius is smothered under an indifference as brutal as that of the age in which Dante died, and Tasso and Cervantes and *tutti quanti*. The people are as backward as kings in understanding the creations of genius.

These opinions on the subject of Balthazar Claës filtered, little by little, from the upper society of Douai to the bourgeoisie, and from the bourgeoisie to the lower classes. The old chemist excited pity among persons of his own rank, satirical curiosity among the others, — two sentiments big with contempt and with the *vae victis* with which the masses assail a man of genius when they see him in misfortune. Persons often stopped before the House of Claës to show each other the rose window of the garret where so much gold and so much coal had been consumed in smoke. When Balthazar passed along the streets they pointed to him with their fingers; often, on catching sight of him, a mocking jest or a word of pity would escape the lips of a working-man or some mere child. But Lemulquinier was careful to tell his master it was homage; he could deceive

him with impunity, for though the old man's eyes retained the sublime clearness which results from the habit of living among great thoughts, his sense of hearing was enfeebled.

To most of the peasantry, and to all vulgar and superstitious minds, Balthazar Claës was a sorcerer. The noble old mansion, once named by common consent "the House of Claës," was now called in the suburbs and the country districts "the Devil's House." Every outward sign, even the face of Lemulquinier, confirmed the ridiculous beliefs that were current about Balthazar. When the old servant went to market to purchase the few provisions necessary for their subsistence, picking out the cheapest he could find, insults were flung in as make-weights, — just as butchers slip bones into their customers' meat, — and he was fortunate, poor creature, if some superstitious market-woman did not refuse to sell him his meagre pittance lest she be damned by contact with an imp of hell.

Thus the feelings of the whole town of Douai were hostile to the grand old man and to his attendant. The neglected state of their clothes added to this repulsion; they went about clothed like paupers who have seen better days, and who strive to keep a decent appearance and are ashamed to beg. It was probable that sooner or later Balthazar would be insulted in the streets. Pierquin, feeling how degrading to the family any pub-

lic insult would be, had for some time past sent two or three of his own servants to follow the old man whenever he went out, and keep him in sight at a little distance, for the purpose of protecting him if necessary, — the revolution of July not having contributed to make the citizens respectful.

By one of those fatalities which can never be explained, Claës and Lemulquinier had gone out early in the morning, thus evading the secret guardianship of Monsieur and Madame Pierquin. On their way back from the ramparts they sat down to sun themselves on a bench in the place Saint-Jacques, an open space crossed by children on their way to school. Catching sight from a distance of the defenceless old men, whose faces brightened as they sat basking in the sun, a crowd of boys began to talk of them. Generally, children's chatter ends in laughter ; on this occasion the laughter led to jokes of which they did not know the cruelty. Seven or eight of the first-comers stood at a little distance, and examined the strange old faces with smothered laughter and remarks which attracted Lemulquinier's attention.

“ Hi ! do you see that one with a head as smooth as my knee ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Well, he was born a Wise Man.”

“ My papa says he makes gold,” said another.

The youngest of the troop, who had his basket full of provisions and was devouring a slice of bread and butter, advanced to the bench and said boldly to Lemulquinier, —

“ Monsieur, is it true you make pearls and diamonds ? ”

“ Yes, my little man,” replied the valet, smiling and tapping him on the cheek ; “ we will give you some if you study well.”

“ Ah ! monsieur, give me some, too,” was the general exclamation.

The boys all rushed together like a flock of birds, and surrounded the old men. Balthazar, absorbed in meditation from which he was drawn by these sudden cries, made a gesture of amazement which caused a general shout of laughter.

“ Come, come, boys ; be respectful to a great man,” said Lemulquinier.

“ Hi, the old harlequin ! ” cried the lads ; “ the old sorcerer ! you are sorcerers ! sorcerers ! sorcerers ! ”

Lemulquinier sprang to his feet and threatened the crowd with his cane ; they all ran to a little distance, picking up stones and mud. A workman who was eating his breakfast near by, seeing Lemulquinier brandish his cane to drive the boys away, thought he had struck them, and took their part, crying out, —

“ Down with the sorcerers ! ”

The boys, feeling themselves encouraged, flung their

missiles at the old man, just as the Comte de Solis, accompanied by Pierquin's servants, appeared at the farther end of the square. The latter were too late, however, to save the old man and his valet from being pelted with mud. The shock was given. Balthazar, whose faculties had been preserved by a chastity of spirit natural to students absorbed in a quest of discovery that annihilates all passions, now suddenly divined, by the phenomenon of introsusception, the true meaning of the scene: his decrepit body could not sustain the frightful reaction he underwent in his feelings, and he fell, struck with paralysis, into the arms of Lemulquinier, who brought him to his home on a shutter, attended by his sons-in-law and their servants. No power could prevent the population of Douai from following the body of the old man to the door of his house, where Félicie and her children, Jean, Marguerite, and Gabriel, whom his sister had sent for, were waiting to receive him.

The arrival of the old man gave rise to a frightful scene; he struggled less against the assaults of death than against the horror of seeing that his children had entered the house and penetrated the secret of his impoverished life. A bed was at once made up in the parlor and every care bestowed upon the stricken man, whose condition, towards evening, allowed hopes that his life might be preserved. The paralysis, though

skilfully treated, kept him for some time in a state of semi-childhood ; and when by degrees it relaxed, the tongue was found to be especially affected, perhaps because the old man's anger had concentrated all his forces upon it at the moment when he was about to apostrophize the children.

This incident roused a general indignation throughout the town. By a law, up to that time unknown, which guides the affections of the masses, this event brought back all hearts to Monsieur Claës. He became once more a great man ; he excited the admiration and received the good-will that a few hours earlier were denied to him. Men praised his patience, his strength of will, his courage, his genius. The authorities wished to arrest all those who had a share in dealing him this blow. Too late, — the evil was done ! The Claës family were the first to beg that the matter might be allowed to drop.

Marguerite ordered furniture to be brought into the parlor, and the denuded walls to be hung with silk ; and when, a few days after his seizure, the old father recovered his faculties and found himself once more in a luxurious room surrounded by all that makes life easy, he tried to express his belief that his daughter Marguerite had returned. At that moment she entered the room. When Balthazar caught sight of her he colored, and his eyes grew moist, though the tears did not fall.

He was able to press his daughter's hand with his cold fingers, putting into that pressure all the thoughts, all the feelings he no longer had the power to utter. There was something holy and solemn in that farewell of the brain which still lived, of the heart which gratitude revived. Worn out by fruitless efforts, exhausted in the long struggle with the gigantic problem, desperate perhaps at the oblivion which awaited his memory, this giant among men was about to die. His children surrounded him with respectful affection; his dying eyes were cheered with images of plenty and the touching picture of his prosperous and noble family. His every look — by which alone he could manifest his feelings — was unchangeably affectionate; his eyes acquired such variety of expression that they had, as it were, a language of light, easy to comprehend.

Marguerite paid her father's debts, and restored a modern splendor to the House of Claës which removed all outward signs of its decay. She never left the old man's bedside, endeavoring to divine his every thought and accomplish his slightest wish.

Some months went by with those alternations of better and worse which attend the struggle of life and death in old people; every morning his children came to him and spent the day in the parlor, dining by his bedside and only leaving him when he went to sleep for the night. The occupation which gave him most

pleasure, among the many with which his family sought to enliven him, was the reading of newspapers, to which the political events then occurring gave a special interest. Monsieur Claës listened attentively as Monsieur de Solis read them aloud beside his bed.

Towards the close of the year 1832, Balthazar passed an extremely critical night, during which Monsieur Pierquin, the doctor, was summoned by the nurse, who was greatly alarmed at the sudden change which took place in the patient. For the rest of the night the doctor remained to watch him, fearing he might at any moment expire in the throes of inward convulsion, whose effects were like those of a last agony.

The old man made incredible efforts to shake off the bonds of his paralysis; he tried to speak and moved his tongue, unable to make a sound; his flaming eyes emitted thoughts; his drawn features expressed an untold agony; his fingers writhed in desperation; the sweat stood in drops upon his brow. In the morning when his children came to his bedside and kissed him with an affection which the sense of coming death made day by day more ardent and more eager, he showed none of his usual satisfaction at these signs of their tenderness. Emmanuel, instigated by the doctor, hastened to open the newspaper to try if the usual reading might not relieve the inward crisis in which Balthazar was evidently struggling. As he unfolded the sheet he saw

the words, "DISCOVERY OF THE ABSOLUTE," — which startled him, and he read a paragraph to Marguerite concerning a sale made by a celebrated Polish mathematician of the secret of the Absolute. Though Emmanuel read in a low voice, and Marguerite signed to him to omit the passage, Balthazar heard it.

Suddenly the dying man raised himself by his wrists and cast on his frightened children a look which struck like lightning; the hairs that fringed the bald head stirred, the wrinkles quivered, the features were illumined with spiritual fires, a breath passed across that face and rendered it sublime; he raised a hand, clenched in fury, and uttered with a piercing cry the famous word of Archimedes, "EUREKA!" — I have found.

He fell back upon his bed with the dull sound of an inert body, and died, uttering an awful moan, — his convulsed eyes expressing to the last, when the doctor closed them, the regret of not bequeathing to Science the secret of an Enigma whose veil was rent away, — too late! — by the fleshless fingers of Death.

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